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Articles | Pages

The Expertise of the European Translators of African Poetry: An Appraisal 1-17
- Adeyola Opaluwah (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Educational Psychology-Oriented Framework for Evaluating AI-Powered Translation Tools: A Proposal 18-32
- Mahboubeh Khalili (University of Mazandaran, Iran)

"Were Comfort Women Voluntarily Employed?": Fact-Checking of Harvard Professor's Denial of War Crime 33-50
- Jae Sik Ha (University of Illinois at Springfield, USA)

Communicating Relationship-building in a Transitional Setting: Using Co-cultural and Relational-cultural Theories to Understand the Transition Experiences of International Students 51-66
- Ian Lértora (Texas Tech University, USA)
- Jesse Starkey (Texas Tech University, USA)

A Movement towards Language Learning by Artificial Intelligence: A PLS-SEM Approach to Instrument Development and Validation 67-87
- Mahboubeh Marzieh Ebrahimi (Kansas State University, USA)
- Hussein Kareem Badi Alsharhani (Al-Mamoun University College, Iraq)
- Atiyeh Kamyabi Gol (Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran)

The Intensification of Global Social Dynamics: The Case of ELT Textbooks in Iran 88-106
- Moslem Zolfagharkhani (Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran)
- Ehsan Nikpouya (Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran)
- Ali Anabestani (Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran)

Implications of Agile Working on Consistency in Localized Content 107-126
- Madiha Kassawat (Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France)

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The Expertise of the European Translators of African Poetry: An Appraisal

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Abstract

This paper appraises the European translators of Wole Soyinka's poetry to underscore their significant role in bringing it to a broader audience. Subconsciously, the literary translator is deemed invisible. However, this need not be retained. The decision process of dealing with the challenges of rendering cultural references and maintaining the aesthetic structure of source poetry is viewed as an expert action by the European translator of African poetry, rife with the nuances of other African languages. This paper reveals an adaptation of Francis Jones's model of the expert action of the Poetry Translator to model appraisal. The model is also a review of European translators' lives and an overview of their translations, particularly relating to Soyinka's poetry, a review of their publications on Soyinka, a review of readers' comments about their translated poetry and other works, and a review of their awards and recognitions, which eventually highlights their expert actions as poetry translators. This appraisal gives credence to discourse on the visibility of literary translators in translation studies.

Keywords

European translators, African poetry, Wole Soyinka, intercultural communication, expertise, appraisal

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1. Introduction

There has been an extensive discourse surrounding literary authors, and this conversation will continue. However, this paper seeks to emphasize the proficiency of European translators in the poetry of eminent African literary figures. From the inception of a translation project to its eventual publication, the translator often remains subtly invisible. This paper proposes to enhance the visibility of European translators by evaluating their contributions to the translation of Wole Soyinka's poetry, other publications regarding him, what others have said about them (the translators), and the awards they have received.

Critics of Soyinka's writing have characterized his poetic style as old-fashioned, craggy, unmusical language and obscure and inaccessible diction (Chinweizu & Madubuike, 1975). Despite criticism of and complexities in Soyinka's poetry, several European translators have ventured into the complexities of translating his poetry. This article assesses the work of Etienne Galle and André Bordeaux, two experienced translators renowned for their expertise in African literature, focusing on their significant achievements in translating Soyinka's three anthologies from English to French. Although Soyinka's poetry is abundant in African cultural themes and multilingual elements, these European translators have highlighted his psycho-cosmic humanism and other significant works.

It is presumed that an appraisal of European translators may encourage more translators to translate African poetry into other European languages but, most importantly, as an added element in the sociological approach to translation studies. Although one of the translators discussed and appraised in this article (André Bordeaux) has passed, his translation of Soyinka's poetry is referenced here. The proposition is for him to be appraised alongside Etienne Galle by reviewing their products (translated poetry, thoughts, and publications on Wole Soyinka).

Framing an appraisal model based on European translators' lives and work is pertinent. Pierre Bourdieu's social theory explores European translators' social actions as translation agents. On a general note, Bourdieu's (1990, p. 53) concept of "habitus" is conceived as a product of history. It becomes an instrument of thoughts, decisions and actions: "The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the habitus, acting as a system of cognitive and motivating structures". This concept is what Vasheghani Farahani (2023, p. 85) refers to as "prior knowledge and area of expertise", and Jones (2011) alluded to it by saying that poetry translation is personal, interpersonal, and poetic.

Adapting Jones's (2011) model of translators' expert actions is imperative for framing the appraisal model. Jones interviewed five published Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) poetry translators to investigate the timelines of their poetry translations. He conducted four face-to-face and one telephone interviews of 1 ½–2 h with the group. It was noted that the main reason these BSC translators decided to enter the poetry translation project was to make such works available to others; they also believed in collegiality that they would not translate a poem that a colleague was already translating. Another crucial policy was that they had to be commissioned by for example, a source poet or editor. They generally

measured the translatability of a poem against an assessment of their abilities. Part of the investigation revealed the peculiar working manners of the translator: some tackled the poems as a whole, and others analytically in parts, and were able to set deadlines regarding speed. Most of the interviewed translators agreed that they provided a reliable representation of the source poem, although it was sometimes challenging to represent the exact poetic form and image. BCS translators also agreed to use translating agents and co-translating them in various forms, and source poems were mainly regarded as veritable text helpers. The translators interviewed confessed that, after publication, it was psychologically rewarding to hear and read the positive comments about the translated poetry. The translators all subscribed to a *double aim* in that they tried to achieve a result that would largely resemble the source poem as a translation and be accepted as a poem in the target language, and consequently, a cognitive double bind, that is, keeping source-text microstructures in working memory while revising.

As regards how expert the action of the poetry translator is, Jones's model is interpreted as starting with the translator (his life and translation actions) and following his interpersonal relationships as it concerns poetry translation. Jones' model, however, was adapted to include more social contexts of the European translator of Soyinka's poetry. The adapted model excludes the review of players and agents, such as publishers of translated poetry and any network with other poets or poetry translators. It also excludes investigating the translation process (how the translators translate in real-time: number of draft versions, time spent on each draft, and duration of the final revision of the draft). The adapted model focuses on (1) a review of European translators' lives, education, and careers; (2) a description of their translations, particularly relating to Wole Soyinka's poetry; (3) a review of their thoughts and publications about Wole Soyinka; (4) a review of readers' comments about their translated poetry; and (5) a review of their awards and recognitions.

2. Translator performance/ competence evaluation

Apart from Francis Jones's works on the expert actions of the poetry translator, works on the appraisal of the translator are rare. Awung (2018), in his doctoral thesis, contended for the representation of Africa through the notion of agency by analyzing John Reed's English translations of the drama pieces *Une vie de Boy* and *Le vieux nègre et la médaille*. Awung (2018), based on Pierre Bourdieu's relational model, highlights the dialectic relationship between agency and structure. This model overcomes the binary opposition between structure and agency by demonstrating that they are interdependent. Awung argued that translation action at the textual level is constrained by the norms of the target literary field (which includes agents such as the commissioner, editor, publisher, translator, and reviewer) and the translator's habitus.

Works evaluating the translators' competence using the TAP (Think Aloud Protocol) and translator job performance appraisals exist. For example, Alves and Gonçalves (2007) presented a rationale and assessed the plausibility of Gonçalves (2003) dynamic cognitive model of translator competence. They showed that a translator's competence is considered a particular cognitive configuration that allows translators to establish a balance between the periphery and central layers of cognitive systems and, from

a situated perspective, enables them to attain an inferentially driven interpretive resemblance between the source and target texts. They mentioned that narrow-band and broadband translators share potential cognitive characteristics (Gambier et al., 2004, pp. 41-55). Alexander Künzli presented some results from an empirical study on the translation revision by ten professional translators who were asked to think aloud while revising three texts translated from French to German (Gambier et al., 2004, pp. 115-125). For Unbabel (2015), the critical indicators of translation performance measured the speed of the translation process, efforts of the translators, and quality of the translations. Julian House, Joss Moorkens, and many others have enriched Translation Studies with works on determining and evaluating translation quality.

One example of a translator-interpreter job appraisal performance form has major sections such as performance rating definitions, performance factors, employee strengths, and accomplishments. The definitions of performance ratings are relevant to this study. For example, outstanding (performance is consistently superior), exceeds expectations (performance is routinely above job requirements), meets expectations (performance is regularly competent and dependable), below expectations (performance fails to meet job requirements frequently), and is unsatisfactory (performance is consistently unacceptable), as these ratings can also be applied in the overall appraisal of the literary translator.

Apart from Francis Jones's work on the Expert Action of the Poetry Translator and Felix Awung's work on the representation of Africa by the translation of the European translator of Ferdinand Oyono's drama pieces by John Reed, to my knowledge, there are no works specifically appraising the literary translator, much less the literary translator of African poetry in the context of their translated works, readers' comments, and what the translators had to say regarding the author.

This paper seeks to answer one central question: How can the European translators of Wole Soyinka's poetry be appraised in the context of their translations of Soyinka's poetry and writings about him?

3. Method

Jones' (2011) model of the expert nature of the poetry translator was adopted and adapted to answer this research question. Although Jones's model reviewed the translators' translation processes and degrees of networks, they were involved in poetry translation, with Bordeaux's demise and Galle's disinterest in sharing any theories or processes in his translation of Soyinka's poetry. The adapted methodology excluded the investigation of translation processes.

3.1. Translators' socio-cultural framework

A sociocultural framework is pertinent to reviews that appraise European translators. Information about the life of the European translator André Bordeaux, who has passed, was sought from Archive[1]. The archive is a French public online archive accessible for consultation and information about the birth and

[1]. archives@nievre.fr

death records of French citizens. The site was consulted because of conflicting online information regarding the birth dates of both European translators. Such government repositories are considered undisputable sources of citizen data. This was followed by a brief e-mail interview with Etienne Galle to obtain information on the sociocultural context of his poetry translation. Five questions were mailed to him in France.

3.2. Poetry translators' metadata

A data description of Etienne Galle and André Bordeaux's translations of Wole Soyinka's poetry precedes a brief mention of their other literary translations. Etienne Galle and André Bordeaux translated three of Wole Soyinka's anthologies. According to Jones (2011), studying the nature of a translator's choice of poems is worthwhile for understanding his sociocultural background.

3.3. Translators' reflection about Soyinka

Two books by Etienne Galle and a foreword by André Bordeaux about Wole Soyinka were chosen to understand and review the European translators' impressions of the African literary giant. Galle's two books on Soyinka are *Connaitre Wole Soyinka* and *L'homme vivant de Wole Soyinka*; his creation and recurrent use of an eponymous adjective about Wole Soyinka revealed his consensus with all that Wole Soyinka stood for. Bordeaux's only impressions about Wole Soyinka are the foreword given in the poem *Idanre: Poème.*

3.4. Readers' comments and translators' reward

The proposed appraisal was completed by examining readers' comments on the poetry translations of European translators of African poetry, comments on their other non-poetry translations, and the European translators' awards and recognitions.

4. Results and discussion

Wole Soyinka's foremost poetry translator is Étienne Galle, followed by André Bordeaux. Galle translated more of Soyinka's poetry than Bordeaux, who translated only *Idanre*. This discussion focuses on the proposed appraisal model.

4.1. Translators' life and career

A peek into the translators' lives and careers, which, according to Bourdieu (1990), is conceived as a product of history and becomes an instrument of thoughts, decisions, and actions, which, according to Jones, is personal and interpersonal is explored here. Two email interviews were sent to Etienne Galle, and his responses revealed that he had been married for over 50 years to a Nigerien and had Nigerien nationality without losing his French nationality. He had lived in Niamey for 23 years (E. Galle, personal

communication, August 31, 2024). Jones's (2011) model did not include the personal details of the five BCS poets he interviewed, but as an adapted model, this detail was deemed fit for inclusion. To be noted is that Galle lived and worked in the Niger Republic as a teacher specializing in African literature at the University of Niamey (now Abdou Moumouni University) after working in France for a while.

In shedding introductory light on the expert action of the poetry translator, Jones discusses the poetry translator's processes. He expanded on how the poetry translator worked with the source poet and others in a team or a network of players and agents. However, Galle unreservedly mentioned that he did not enter into any form or degree of network with the other poets. As per ideology, Jones (2006a, p. 193) in Jones (2011) states that three types of ideology appear particularly important in poetry translation: socio-political, aesthetic and intercultural ideologies. Even in language choice, which is one basis for translation, there seems to be an exhibition of ideological orientation (Chen, 2023).

These five questions were sent via e-mail to Etienne Galle. To understand whether he had subscribed to any of the three ideologies mentioned in the preceding paragraph: (1) Did you have political motivation to translate Wole Soyinka's poetry? Alternatively, did political motivations emerge at some point during translation? To understand whether his decision to translate Soyinka was influenced by his environment and sojourn in Africa. (2) Are you affiliated with Nigeria and other African countries? (3) Where were you based during the translation period? France or Niger? To understand the agency aspect of Galle's poetry translation, (4) did you network with other poets or poetry translators during your translation? In France or Africa? To investigate whether he was commissioned by the author, Wole Soyinka, or others: (5) Was the translation project personal, political or from the poet?

Galle's intercultural ideology was revealed through his email responses. His responses show that his translations of Soyinka's poetry were not politically, theoretically, or author-motivated; he translated them out of desire and interest. Haven spent over 23 years of his life in the Niger Republic; it is possible that most of his poetry translations were conducted in Africa. "J'ai traduit par intérêt pour l'original, afin d'en mieux ressentir les valeurs et les beautés, et pour les mettre à la portée des lecteurs francophones" ("I translated out of interest for the source text, in order to better feel its values and beauties, and to put them within the reach of French-speaking readers", E. Galle, personal communication, August 31, 2024).

Little is known about André Bordeaux's personal life compared with that of Etienne Galle. Email correspondence from Archives[1] however, confirmed that André Bordeaux was born on the 13th of July 1924 in Decize, Nièvre, France, and died in 1991, a lecturer of English language and literature at François-Rabelais University in Tours.

4.2. Translated poetry and other works

Jones (2011) distinguished between process- and product-based poetry translation research or investigation methods. Galle's responses indicated he did not work with or in any network, but this

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assertion could not be made regarding Bordeaux. Nevertheless, this section describes the translations of Wole Soyinka's anthologies and other career-related literary works.

4.2.1. Galle's translations

Galle's French translation collection, *Cycles sombres*, consists of 30 poems drawn from *Idanre and other poems, A Shuttle in the Crypt* and *Ogun Abibimaň. Idanre and Other Poems* is a collection of 37 poems by Soyinka, from which Étienne Galle translated six poems and André Bordeaux. Galle translated 23 poems from A Shuttle in the Crypt, a collection of 34 poems by Soyinka. *Ogun Abibimaň* is a long single poem of three parts.

Idanre and Other Poems is a collection of thirty-seven poems by Soyinka published in 1967. In this collection, Étienne Galle translated six poems to make up *Cycles sombres:* Black Singer, Ikeja, Friday, Four O'clock, Harvest of Hate, Massacre '66, Civilian and Soldier, and Season. André Bordeaux translated only one poem, published as *Idanre: Poème* in 1982. According to Léopard Sédar Senghor, it is a long "cosmogonique" (Soyinka, 1982, p. 5) poem of seven parts.

A Shuttle in the Crypt was a collection of thirty-four poems by Soyinka. In this Collection, Étienne Galle translated twenty-three poems to make up *Cycles sombres*: O Roots! Conversation at Night with a Cockroach; A Cobweb's Touch in The Dark; When Seasons Change; To the Mad Men over the Wall; I Anoint My flesh; Wailing Wall; Wall of Mists; Amber Wall; Purgatory; Vault Center; Procession; Last turning; Recession; Hunt of the Stone; Space; Seed; Live burial; Flowers for my land; Animistic spells; Capital; Ujamaa; Après la Guerre.

Ogun Abibimaň is a long, single poem in three parts by Wole Soyinka, published in 1976. Étienne Galle translated it into French and included it in the *Cycles sombres* digital collection of 2019.

Mandela's Earth and Other Poems by Wole Soyinka, published in 1988, contains 16 poems: Your Logic Frighten's Me Mandela; Like Rudolf Hess, The Man Said; So now They Burn the Roof Above Her Head; Funeral Sermon, Soweto; "No" He Said; Apologia; After the Deluge; Apollodorus On The Niger; The Apotheosis of Master Sergeant Doe; New York, U.S.A; Muhammad Ali at The Ringside, 1985; My Tongue does not Marry Slogans; Dragonfly at My Windowpane; Campus, Ile-Ife; Cremation of a Wormy Caryatid. This anthology was translated into French by Étienne Galle in 1989 as *La Terre de Mandela.*

Apart from translating poetry, Etienne Galle has also translated a number of other Soyinka's works from English to French vis: *Les interprets (The Interpreters)*, *Une saison d'anomie (Season of Anomy)*, *Aké, les années d'enfance (Ake, The Years of Childhood)*, *De l'Afrique : et autres essais*, *Climat de peur (Climate of Fear)*, *Il te faut partir à l'aube (You Must Set Forth at Dawn), Cet homme est mort (The man died), Que ce passé parle à son présent : discourse de Stockholm (This Past Must Address Its Present: Stockholm speech), Les Bacchantes d'Euripide : rite de communion (The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite)*, *Ibadan, les années pagailles (Ibadan: The penkelemes years: A memoir)*, *Requiem pour un futurologue (Requiem for a Futurologist)*, *Isara , périple autour de mon père (Isara: A Voyage*

Around Essay). Apart from translating Wole Soyinka, Étienne Galle has also translated Baaba Sillah's novel *When The Monkey Talks* from Gambian English to French as *Quand le Singe Parle,* Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* as *Fils de panthère,* Zaynab Alkali's *Stillborn* as *Jusqu'au bout de ses rêves*, translation of Baba Jallows book *The Grave Yard Cannot Pray* into the French *Le Cimetière ne prie pas*, Chinua Achebe's *Termites of the Savannah* into French as *Termitières de la savane*, Francis Serlomey's work as *Koffi L'enfant du Ghana*, translation of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *A fleur de peau*, an introduction for *Poesie de la langue anglaise*. The works mentioned above, as well as Galle's own, *Connaitre Wole Soyinka, L'homme vivant de Wole Soyinka*, *L'humanisme cosmique de Wole Soyinka* (Etienne Galle's doctoral thesis), *Ce gout de l'autre*, have not shown any traces of human translator bias against African literature or poetry. Instead, Étienne Galle seems enraptured by the Yoruba culture and psychocosmic humanism portrayed by Soyinka in his writing. The eponymous adjective "soyinkaïen" (Galle, 1983, pp. 31, 75, 77), "soyinkaïene" (Galle, 2017, pp. 15, 64, 65, 122, 160) often used by Etienne Galle, echoes his belief in and acceptance of all that Wole Soyinka stands for.

4.2.2. Bordeaux's work

According to Jones (2011), translators communicating with readers do more than understand or rewrite poems. They may select a poet's work to communicate with. As seen in the choice of poems translated by André Bordeaux, one wonders and is understudied in this research because of his demise. He translated only one long poem of seven parts from the same anthology of 31 poems that Etienne Galle chose to translate six.

Apart from Bordeaux's French translation *Idanre: poème* in 1982 of Soyinka's *Idanre and Other Poems*, Bordeaux's other works include *l'Épreuve d'anglais* on the test of English, published in collaboration with René Allewaert in 1964, a Book Review of Hilaire Belloc's *Complete Verse* in 1971, a French translation revision of *Un Paria des îles* in 1983, originally written by Joseph Conrad in English and his introduction for Pierre Téqui's Christian religious book of 155 epistolic letters *Choix de lettres* of Cardinal Newman in 1990.

Bordeaux's choice of translated poems, his review of other authors' poems and introduction to Newman's epistolic letters shows his belief in the complex and independent nature of man: "La personne humaine est un organisme vivant et complexe qui se développe grace aux efforts de notre volonté" (Tequi, 2010, p. 16). In his introduction to Tequi's publication of Cardinal Newman, he exalts Newman's living conscience (the human mind), recognizing that the human mind can be developed through the efforts of will (Tequi, 2010, pp. 15-18). Galle also alludes to this complex human nature "Dans ce monde doté d'un envers secret, l'homme possède une dimension divine" (Galle, 2017, p. 108).

4.3. Translators' word about Soyinka

According to Jones (2011), translators sometimes combine translating with other roles, such as co-editing and writing paratexts, thereby wielding power and influence. An example of these "other roles" combined

by translators is Galle's introduction of *Poésie de langue anglaise* (1996) and Bordeaux's introduction of *Cardinal Newman: Choix de Lettres* (2010). However, an examination of Soyinka's writing style is also pertinent.

According to Elimimian (2013), Wole Soyinka's poetic art is often considered difficult and complex, which may explain the limited exploration of his full range of works. His poems are characterized by a language charged with rhythmic and emotional intensity, aligned with the dramatic lyric mode. Soyinka's poetry frequently exhibits dramatic mood, tone, and setting shifts, incorporating stylistic elements such as passion, spontaneity, repetition, and rhetorical questioning. These techniques not only add glamour but also enhance the lyrical structure of his works. His successful exploration of both narrative and didactic lyric modes is a remarkable feature, blending profound emotional depth with themes that juxtapose individual predicaments against broader social responsibility. While some of his language is arranged in technical and tortuous quatrains and occasionally obscure, his use of religious and vernacular language reflects an interrelationship between diverse linguistic forms. Through vivid images and motifs, Soyinka sheds light on his thematic and linguistic narratives, employing ironies, antitheses, and ellipses to enrich his poetic expressions.

Even though Soyinka's poetic themes varied from racial discrimination and man's inhumanity to man, political corruption, social justice, death, Yoruba socio-culturalism, colonialism, and war, the European translators translated them without choosing any themes. Jones, however, revealed that "target-country publishers, who produced most projects overall, may well have disproportionally favoured war-themed projects" (2011, p. 82) in the then-BCS region.

One point of departure of the adapted model from Jones's model of the expert action of the poetry translator is that Jones's model did not include an investigation of BCS translators' writing about the author of the poems they translated. In the proceeding sub-section, two of Etienne Galle's publications and André Bordeaux's foreword were examined, which reveal their reflections about the author of the poetry they translated, are *L'homme vivant de Wole Soyinka ("The Living Man of Wole Soyinka"),* first published by Silex in 1987, *Connaître Wole Soyinka ("Understanding Wole Soyinka"),* published by L'Harmattan in 2018 and Bordeaux's foreword to *Idanre: Poème.*

4.3.1. *The Living Man*

Etienne Galle's *L'homme vivant de Wole Soyinka* is a 336-page book of two parts with seven chapters in which Galle expounds on Wole Soyinka's ideas of the living man through the figures, characters, and Yoruba gods portrayed in most of Soyinka's works, which he also translated. He explained the psychocosmic personality of Wole Soyinka by describing characters with the same psychocosmic attributes as in Soyinka's works. Galle's interest in the Yoruba culture is seen in his description of Yoruba foods like *moin-moin* (2017, p. 46), "du jogi, de l'akara, de l'akamu, du kasada, de l'ogiri et du chin-chin', "tinko", "gbegiri", etc. ("some jogi", "some akara", "some akamu", "some kasada", "some ogiri" and "some chin-chin", "tinko", "gbegiri."; Galle, 2017, p. 47). In other parts of his book, he preferred to

use “beignets de haricot” (“beans puffs.”; 2017, p. 45) to replace *akara* and “ bouillie de maïs” “pap.”; 2017, p. 140) to replace *akamu*.

In writing about Soyinka, Galle exposes the French audience to the discourse on cosmic energies and the Yoruba cosmogony. He insinuated that the Yorubas believe that there are people who possess extraordinary powers of the same level (2017, p. 81) and that the Yoruba divinity is replete with psychocosmic energies (2017, p. 100, 105).

Galle presented the French readership with an unfamiliar relationship between the dead and the living, where death is simply a door for the dead human hero to live as a god and directly consents to the belief that gods sometimes live with men. His work shows his knowledge of the Yoruba gods: “Esumare, dieu de l’arc-en-ciel” (“Esumare, god of the rainbow”; Galle, 2017, pp. 109, 214), “Esuoro, l’ennemi d’Ogun” (“Esuoro, Ogun’s enemy”; Galle, 2017, p. 126), “Shango qui converse avec l’homme dans la langue de l’éclair” (“Shango that discusses with man in the language of thunder”; Galle, 2017, p. 107), “Obatala est le dieu qui change le sang en enfants” (“Obatala is the god that turns blood to children”; Galle, 2017, p. 120), “Ogun le dieu yorouba du fer” (“Ogun the Yoruba god of iron”; Galle, 2017, p. 25), etc for the perusal and reflection of the French people.

Etienne Galle also propounded the value of isolation in his work about Soyinka. He spoke of research in isolation that makes altruistic action and benevolence possible (2017, p. 211). Galle proposed that he who isolates himself is better than he is not.

In describing Soyinka’s moments of unjustified imprisonment in Kaduna, Galle revealed his sympathetic side. He sensed the crushing effect of hopelessness that a man’s spirit could experience “de la rencontre de l’esprit humain avec l’angoisse désintégrante que Soyinka a lui-même éprouvée face à l’infini affronté dans l’épreuve initiatique du désespoir” (“from the encounter of the human spirit with the disintegrating anguish that Soyinka himself experienced in the face of the infinite confronted in the initial ordeal of despair”; Galle, 2017, p. 215).

Galle’s analysis of Wole Soyinka’s cosmic humanism, as portrayed by the characters in his works, raises research questions in the humanities and arts. There is a celestial symbolism of clothes, food, music, and dance. As Galle analyzed the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the importance of the attires worn by Soyinka’s characters, he subtly reminded scholars in the field of fashion that there is the possibility that clothing and attires not only make statements but are statements “le vêtement est une parole” (“clothing is speech”; Galle, 2017, p. 291). Galle agreed with Soyinka that dances can link life and death; this raises the question of how many scholars research the spiritual link between the living and the dead in African and Western dances. Is dance believed to be a privileged symbolic instrument of communication with the psychocosmic world in the West, as some believe in Africa? Does research exist that examines the spiritual significance of the beat-maker’s role? Is it feasible to argue that the beatmaker may possess more profound spiritual relevance than the songwriter? Galle raised the notion of the perceived depth of sacred rhythms and songs. “Rythmes sacrés…saisir la signification pour percevoir la profondeur” (“sacred rythms…to grasp meaning in order to perceive depth”; Galle, 2017, p. 304). Galle

concurs that music can be communication with invisible energies "la musique est l'instrument des rencontres avec l'au-delà" (Galle, 2017, p. 305). Galle is enraptured by Soyinka's "cosmic totalism" (Mudimbe & Kavwahirehi, 2021, p. 644).

4.3.2. Analytic versus intuitive thinking

Again, Galle brings Soyinka's personality to the French public through the book *Connaitre Wole Soyinka,* published by L'Harmattan in 2018. He started by arguing that the man Soyinka had been fully formed even in his childhood and that his Africanity had enriched specific visions of the world. Galle revealed that to qualify Soyinka's totality, one must subscribe to his cosmic totalism, and Soyinka's cosmic totalism is a result of his practical experiences with the god *Ogun*. Soyinka's grandfather convinced him that *Ogun* had protected him, and Soyinka wasted no time adopting *Ogun* as his principal companion.

Galle noted that he faced a dilemma that every one of Soyinka's translators would eventually face: deciding whether to render Soyinka's work more clearly and accessible or to translate his abundant, bushy, and meandering literal complexity. Galle, however, said he chose to translate the man as he is and, in so doing, opened previously unknown horizons to the French audience: "il est bon d'apprendre a dépasser l'effort rebutant d'une lecture parfois difficile pour entrer dans un monde capable de nous ouvrir des horizons inconnus" ("it is good to learn to go beyond the daunting effort of sometimes difficult reading to enter a world capable of opening up unknown horizons to us"; Galle, 2018, p. 11).

Etienne Galle expounded ten milestones about understanding Wole Soyinka, viz: cosmic totalism, matter and spirit, extrasensory path, extrasensory reaction, analytic and intuitive thinking, selective eclectism, ethics, languages, emptiness and politics; but only one of these milestones will be analyzed in this paper: Analytic versus intuitive thinking (Galle, 2018, pp. 66-73). Galle argued in favor of the importance of intuitive thinking as much as discursive and analytic thinking, which is often subscribed to by the West. He concurred with Soyinka that reflexive and intuitive thinking are similar in Africa. He disagreed that Western thinking should disregard intuitive thinking favoring discursive analytical thinking. Appreciation is accorded to Galle for bringing to the fore in the French language, the discussion bordering on the adverse effect of relegating the African intuitive thinking to the background "Soyinka voit bien cependant dans la pensée occidentale une sorte de fatalité pour l'ensemble de l'humanité, une tendance qui se renforce avec le progrès scientifique qui la conforte dans son rationalisme et qui lui fait toujours plus dévaloriser l'intuition et ses implications ontologiques, éthiques et esthétiques" ("Soyinka, however, sees in Western thought a sort of inevitability for all of humanity, a tendency which is reinforced with scientific progress which reinforces its rationalism and which makes it increasingly devalue intuition and its ontological, ethical and aesthetic implications"; Galle, 2018, p. 71). Galle concludes that it is difficult for materialist Western intelligence to conceive of this universe, even more so to admit its existence, even if its expression is symbolic (Galle, 2018). It is not to be overlooked that Etienne Galle created the eponymous adjective, *soyinkaeïn*, which he uses now and again in his publications on Wole Soyinka, showing his alliance with Soyinka's beliefs.

4.3.3. Bordeaux about Soyinka

According to André Bordeaux, the poem *Idanre* is the most extended and most eloquent of those Soyinka had written bearing the light and depth of poetic motivation "paraît susceptible d' apporter des lumières sur les profondes motivations poétiques de l'homme de théâtre" ("seems likely to shed light on the deep poetic motivations of the man of theater"; Soyinka, 1982, p. 15).

Bordeaux revealed the events that led to Soyinka's writing of the poem *Idanre*. For Bordeaux, Idanre was an impression of power and mystery (Soyinka, 1982, p. 15). Like Galle, Bordeaux reiterates the importance and place of African intuitive thinking that Soyinka upholds above Western analytic thinking. He did not hold back from writing that the poem *Idanre* crystallized the whole texture of intuition from which the author began to take consciousness, with speech preceding intuition (Soyinka, 1982, p. 15).

4.3.4. Reviews, comments and recognition

Jones's model includes papers and web reviews of translated Bosnian poetry. He noted that most paper-published poetry received more reviews than web-published poetry, a project's power to recruit reviewers depending on distribution networks, and that in practice, most reviewers seem to be target-language literary writers (2011, p. 79). The proposed appraisal of European translators of African poetry excludes reviews by target-language literary writers, and only a few comments from readers are available. The awards and recognition given to Galle and Bordeaux form the last part of the appraisal model.

Galle and Bordeaux received comments, forewords, and memories because of their contributions to literature, poetry, translation, and pedagogy. Boase-Beier, for example, believes that many poetry translators are published original poets and that "it is the translator's standing as a poet that helps readers to read translations of poetry" (Millán & Bartrina, 2017, p. 475).

4.4. Acknowledging Galle

In Galle's (2017) publication about Wole Soyinka, *Connaitre Wole Soyinka*, a commentator wrote **"**Un livre magnifique et l'exemplaire d'occasion est en excellent état. Une des lectures les plus bouleversantes et fortes de ces derniers temps" ("A magnificent book and the used copy is in excellente condition. One of the most moving and powerful reads of recent times"; Toujours fidèle[1], 2021). Another commentator wrote about his translation *Les termitieres de la savane* 'Termites of the Savanah,*' "*Ecriture impressionante, belle traduction, histoire halletante. Magnifique" ("Impressive writing, beautiful translation, gripping story. Gorgeous"; Vince[2], 2015).

Biodun Jeyifo, in the preface to his book *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature,* lauds a group of friends of which Etienne Galle was part, "Over the years, I have been the fortunate beneficiary

[1]. Retrieved from https://short-link.me/TB4U
[2]. Retrieved from https://short-link.me/Q-y7

of the unwavering support of friends and interlocutors whose contribution, in many intangibles but invaluable ways, sustained me in the course of writing this book" (Jeyifo, 2004, p. xxii). Moruwawon and Josi (2011, p. 2) also acknowledged Galle's contribution to the growth and expansion of modern African Literature through the publication of scholarly articles in both French and English in reputable journals, and the translation of modern African literature from English to French.

4.5. Lauding Bordeaux

In the preface to the French version of *Idanre* translated by Bordeaux, Léopold Sédar Senghor acknowledged that the French translation is destined for the French readership in the Hexagon. Senghor alludes to the expertise of the European translator who undertook the translation in terms of the long poem, which is seven parts cosmogenic and mythical. In this preface, Senghor refers to the poem translated by Bordeaux as a narrative from ancient Africa, embodying human truth through the symbolic ancestral god, *Ogun.*

In lauding the choice of passages selected by André Bordeaux and Allewaert in their publication of *l'Épreuve D'anglais* 'English Test', Louis Landré, Head of teaching of the English Language at Sorbonne for the General Certificate of Literary Studies thus writes a foreword "nous les en félicitons – a recueillir aussi des textes donnés soit comme exercices soit comme sujets d'examen dans diverses autres Facultés" ("we congratulate them – also collecting texts given either as exercises or as exam subjects in various other Faculties"; Allewaert & Bordeaux, 1964, p. 3).

An Anglo-Saxon publication by the University of Tours, *La Parole et les voix: Écriture et memoir,* 'Speech and Voice: Writing and Memoir, a mixture of writings, was dedicated to him by friends. This publication revealed how his contributions to poetry, poetry translation, and the English language are highly esteemed.

A festschrift was dedicated to Bordeaux. Six authors had lines of recognition regarding Bordeaux and his work in the festschrift of 25 articles on André Bordeaux. In the festschrift, Wole Soyinka was the first to recognize Bordeaux as a translator, particularly of *Idanre*, a poet, and a friend, dedicating the poem "Campus, Ile-Ife" in *Mandela's Earth*, *and other poems* to him. Michel Taillé praised him as a specialist "Dans le cadre d'un volume d'hommages à un spécialiste" ("As part of a volume of tributes to a specialist", Besnault, Doubinsky & Lascombes, 1989, p. 49). According to Marc Chenétier, he remembers Bordeaux as the teacher who introduced him to translation "De 1964 to 1970, André Bordeaux m'initia à la traduction et me fit partager son amour de la poésie" ("From 1964 to 1970, André Bordeaux initiated me to translation and shared his love of poetry with me"; Besnault et al., 1989, p. 61). Robert Marshall, professor Emeritus of French Virginia USA, says, "André Bordeaux, in his distinguished career as an interpreter of English literature to several generations of French students, has played a role French critics have traditionally played by championing the cause of writers, artists, and composers of other nations and disseminating their works throughout the West" (Besnault et al., 1989, p. 77). Gerard Deléchelle recalls and appreciates Bordeaux's teaching profession **"**Depuis l'époque, déjà lointaine, où nous suivions

l'enseignement d'André Bordeaux dans cette discipline" ("from time past when we followed the teaching of André Bordeaux in this discipline"; Besnault et al., 1989, p. 91). Besnault Marie-Hélène the editor of the festschrift lauds André Bordeaux's translation skills and his adaptation of some of Shakespeare's sonnets into rural French **"**pendant quelque temps le Morvan continua d'arroser la Tamise et André Bordeaux, dont les talents de traducteur n'étaient plus à démontrer, adapta en Français rural quelques sonnets de Shakespeare" ("for a while, the Morvan continued to water the Thames and André Bordeaux, whose talents as a translator were no longer in doubt, adapted some of Shakespeare's sonnets into rural French"; Besnault et al., 1989, p. 256).

5. Conclusion

This paper has proposed an appraisal of European translators of the poetry of the literary giant, Wole Soyinka. To do this, Francis Jones's model of the expert action of the poetry translator was adapted. While Jones's model revolved more around the translation processes of five BSC poetry translators and their translation agencies and networks, the adapted model excluded the processes of the poetry translators due to Bordeaux's demise. Instead, the adapted model was based on their habitus and products: their lives, career experiences, poetry, reflections on their translated works, readers' comments about their works and translations, and awards and recognition. Other points of departure of the proposed appraisal from the Jones' model include reviewing their works and their thoughts about the source author, readers' comments, and awards.

It is common knowledge that there are attendant problems involved in poetry translation, and these problems become more prominent in the presence of cultural references and infusions with other languages such as Swahili, Akan, Pidgin, and Yoruba, which have become hallmarks of Soyinka's poetry. For example, the poem *Ogun Abibimañ* (Soyinka, 1976), translated by Etienne Galle into French, is full of both Akan, Swahili and Yoruba cultural references like *Sigidi*, *Bayete*, *Ogun, Chaka, Ògbòdiyàn, Abibimañ,* etc. The poem *Idanre* (Soyinka, 1967)*,* translated by André Bordeaux*,* is infused with Yoruba words such as *Sango, Ire, Orunmila, Orisa-nla, Esu, Idanre, and ogboni*. The efforts of these European translators to attempt the translation of whole anthologies infused with cultural references of different African languages to bring knowledge to the French readership are significant reasons for the proposed appraisal. "Ancestral figures/deities such as *Esu* and *Ogun* were spelt differently by European translators (Opaluwah, 2024) at different times in their translations of Soyinka's three anthologies, whereas Bordeaux translated *Ogun* as *Ogoun* (Soyinka, 1982, p. 17) in *Idanre: poème*, Galle rendered *Esu* as *Eshou* (Soyinka, 1989, p. 72) in *La terre de mandela*. Moreover, Etienne Galle chose to render *Idanre* as *Idanré* (Soyinka, 1989, p. 91; Soyinka, 2019, p. 158) with the French accent on the letter **e**, while Bordeaux chose to render the same sacred hill as *Idanre,* without the French accent.

Aside from the orthographic challenges presented by some Yoruba cultural terms in Soyinka's poetry translations, there may also be aesthetic issues that "are correlative with the various types of meaning in the text" (Singh, 2013) encountered by translators of African poetry. According to Singh, aesthetics in poetry translation encompasses a poetic structure that includes the original poem's layout, as well as the

shape and balance of each line's sentences. For Singh, a translator cannot overlook these elements while sound pertains to anything associated with auditory expression, including rhyme, rhythm, assonance, and onomatopoeia. The poetic structure was preserved in most of Soyinka's poetry, which was translated by Etienne Galle, and in the single long poem by André Bordeaux. For instance, in *Idanre*, the first and second parts consist of seven and 29 stanzas, respectively; this poetic structure mirrors that of the translated version of *Idanre: Poème*. The poem, "For Nelson Mandela", contains nine stanzas with five or six lines each; Galle also maintained this poetic structure in the French translation of "For Nelson Mandela". Aesthetics did not appear to pose a problem for the European translators. One cultural term deemed challenging to translate into French by Etienne Galle is "Louisville Lips" from the poem "Muhammad Ali at The Ringside, 1985", in the anthology *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems*; it was rendered as "lèvres naguère si agiles, à Louisville" in French; linguistically, this should have been left untranslated as it is the name by which Muhammad Ali is known in certain circles.

Like most of the cultural items reviewed above, proverbs and metaphors in source poetry have been translated linguistically by European translators. For example, the metaphoric title of a poem, "My Tongue Does Not Marry Slogans," in *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* anthology, was translated as "Ma langue n'épouse pas les slogans" in French by Galle.

From the available data, it can be concluded that, while Galle's habitus and translation product of Soyinka's poetry are more well-known, little information about Bordeaux's life is available, and he has less involvement in translating it. However, based on the attendant difficulties in translating Soyinka's poetry, both European translators deserve to be recognized for translating African poetry.

One point that an appraisal of European translators of African poetry can achieve is to augment the translator's visibility. Galle, in Particular, loves to understand, participate in, and communicate with the totality of Soyinka's beliefs, and he brings this understanding, participation, and communion to the French public. A review of Galle's *L'homme vivant de Wole Soyinka* and *Connaître Wole Soyinka* and the eponymous adjective "soyinkaïen" he spontaneously created of Soyinka has the potential to open research vistas in the Arts and Humanities. Galle's creation of an eponymous adjective and the infusion of his reflections on Wole Soyinka's philosophy with academic ideas could only be specific to the expert action of a translator. Galle's writings on Soyinka open the vistas of scholastic research into the spiritual aspects of African and Western dressing, music, and dance; he has built an interest in African culture and in the *soyinkaïen* philosophy. Galle explained Soyinka's psychocosmic personality by describing characters with the same psychocosmic attributes in Soyinka's works. Galle's interest in the Yoruba culture is seen in his description of Yoruba foods like "moin-moin" (Galle, 2017, p. 46), "du jogi, de l'akara, de l'akamu, du kasada, de l'ogiri et du chin-chin", "tinko", "gbegiri", etc. (Galle, 2017, p. 47). In other parts of his book, he showed his interest in bringing his knowledge of Yoruba foods to the French by adapting the translation "beignets de haricot" (Galle, 2017, p. 45) to replace *akara* and "bouillie de maïs" (Galle, 2017, p. 140) to replace *akamu*.

Idanre, a long cosmogenic poem of seven parts translated by André Bordeaux, revealed human truth by presenting the Yoruba ancestral deity *Ogun* to the French readership. Bordeaux's efforts in translating the culture-specific item (CSI) *The Iron One* in the poem are seen in his different French translations as *Ogoun* (Soyinka, 1982, p. 17), *Fer en personne* (Soyinka, 1982, p. 17), and *Dieu du fer* (Soyinka, 1982, p. 27).

Appraising literary translators is considered novel. The presumption is that the African poetry translator and, by extension, the literary translator generally do not have to be invisible. Etienne Galle and André Bordeaux have invested their time, professionalism, and emotions in translating Soyinka's poetry. Jones (2011) mentioned that successful poetry translation is driven by positive emotions such as self-confidence, enjoyment, hope, and loyalty. The appraisal model used in this study can be adapted and replicated to appraise translators of other genres in different world regions.

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Educational Psychology-Oriented Framework for Evaluating AI-Powered Translation Tools: A Proposal

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Abstract

The present research seeks to develop an innovative framework for evaluating and selecting AI-powered translation tools, with the goal of incorporating the new technology into translator education. Two phases were considered in the development of this framework. In the initial phase, 28 AI-powered translation tools were identified and compared in order to create a checklist. The second phase was designed at a higher, more specialized level to systemize the teaching process. To this end, existing literature in the field of education was thoroughly reviewed to extract the fundamental principles that should be considered in the teaching process. Finally, the overall framework was structured into two phases. The first phase involved evaluating the practicality of the tools based on the checklist. The second phase assessed the compatibility of the tools approved in the first phase with the features of the selected psychological and epistemological approaches to teaching and learning.

Keywords

translation teaching, AI, learning theories, psychological approaches, epistemological approaches

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1. Introduction

One of the fundamental pillars of success in today's rapidly evolving world is the ability to enhance efficiency, while maintaining quality. This expectation has largely arisen owing to the emergence of tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which have taken on a significant portion of human responsibility across various domains. These tools have demonstrated the capability of delivering products of acceptable and, at times, even superior quality compared with human outputs within considerably shorter timeframes (See Johnstone et al., 2024; Wogu et al., 2018). AI has proven to be a transformative force. Its impact spans from reshaping teaching and learning approaches to redefining human interaction and communication (See Yuxiu, 2024; Cotton et al., 2024; Hwang et al., 2020; Kang & Imt, 2013). Thus, the ability to adapt to this new technology and purposefully harness it has become an essential requirement for individuals and societies.

Despite the many advantages and opportunities that AI presents in the field of teaching and learning (See Cotton et al., 2024; Hwang et al., 2020; Goel & Polepeddi, 2018; Popenici & Kerr, 2017; Kang & Imt, 2013), it may not be possible to fully utilize all the capabilities it can offer in translation education, as there are no clear criteria based on which translation instructors can identify and select the most suitable and practical tools. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following question:

What criteria should translation instructors consider when selecting the most suitable AI-powered translation tools?

2. Literature review

2.1. AI in Education and Learning

The contemporary world has witnessed significant transformations since the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). For instance, in the field of education and learning, AI-powered tools have provided not only learners but also instructors with numerous benefits. As this study aimed to develop a framework for evaluating and selecting AI-powered translation tools for pedagogical purposes, understanding the broader role of AI in teaching and learning will provide essential insights into the criteria that should be set.

AI can personalize guidance and support; it also provides feedback that is compatible with everyone's learning style and knowledge level (Hwang et al., 2020). It automates routines (Goel & Polepeddi, 2018; Popenici & Kerr, 2017). It assists in checking learners' performance, analyzing their progress, and identifying their potential (Seo et al., 2021; Fong et al., 2019), which makes the evaluation process easier (Popenici & Kerr, 2017) and allows learners and instructors to interact more (Kang & Imt, 2013). AI-powered tools can also encourage group work (Cotton et al., 2024), just to name a few.

Despite the opportunities afforded by AI in this field, certain challenges persist. For instance, learners' excessive reliance on AI may diminish their capacity to learn independently and reduce their creativity

and critical thinking skills (Wogu et al., 2018). In addition, the use of AI-powered tools can compromise academic integrity, leading to plagiarism, cheating, and assignment outsourcing (Johnstone et al., 2024).

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the integration of AI into education, the benefits of its application in this domain are so substantial that its utilization cannot be overlooked. Currently, key fields of language and translation are significantly affected by this emerging technology. Natural Language Processing (NLP) leverages machine learning techniques to analyze, understand, and generate human language. AI offers numerous advantages such as bridging linguistic and cultural gaps by facilitating communication through features such as speech recognition and machine translation, saving time and costs by automating repetitive tasks, and optimizing decision-making processes, which means that human translators can save their creativity and human ingenuity for more complicated translation tasks (Tavares et al., 2023; Wang, 2023).

Universities not only in Iran but also worldwide are struggling to overcome difficulties related to incorporating AI into their curricula and changing teaching methodologies (Johnstone et al., 2024). The integration of AI into education highlights its potential to enhance the teaching and learning processes in any field, including translation. AI-powered tools can support both instructors and students in optimizing translation training, a fact that makes them valuable to their users in the context of translation education, although they must be invaluable to all their users in any other context, much like the other technologies that preceded them (See Ghassemiazghandi, 2023).

2.2. AI in Translation Studies

Several studies have explored the role of AI in translation. After analyzing the studies which have been conducted recently, a classification consisting of three distinctive areas was established: Yuxiu (2024), Koka (2024), Zaghlool and Khasawneh (2024), Alkodimi et al. (2024), and Kanglang and Afzaal (2021) have studied the impact of AI in translation education; Puppel and Borg (2025), Ameri (2024), Majeed and Taha (2024), Pym (2024), Elkins (2024), Zayed and Nuirat (2024), Al Sawi and Allam (2024), Moneus and Sahari (2024), Fu and Liu (2024), Kadhim (2024), Tavares et al. (2023), Dalayli (2023), Khasawneh (2023), Wang (2023), and Bouguesmia (2020) studied the impact of AI in relation to its professional usage; also, in some studies such as Tekwa (2025) and de Los Reyes Lozano and Mejías-Climent (2023) both areas were considered; Yu and Liu (2024), King Lee (2023), Soysal (2023), Ali and Ali (2023), Asscher (2023), and Fan and Chunlei (2023) have studied the shifts in paradigms, theoretical bases and research methods in translation studies.

A glance at the above-mentioned studies, even those that have delved into the area of translation pedagogy, shows that the most crucial stage of integrating AI into translation training, which is identifying the most practical and suitable tool, has been ignored, which is very critical, especially at present when users' preferences have shifted towards embracing newer translation tools (See Bachelier & Orlando, 2024). Thus, the question that arises is how instructors and students, who are both active users of such

tools, can identify what best suits their needs among the many available options. This is precisely the gap this study aims to address.

3. Method

This study integrates theoretical insights with practical implementation to develop a framework that helps translation instructors to select AI-powered translation tools for classroom use. A systematic two-phase process was employed to structure the framework.

3.1. Developing linguistic and non-linguistic criteria for the preliminary phase

Initially, the literature on either the impact or use of AI in translation education and pedagogy was reviewed to identify existing criteria for evaluating and selecting AI-powered translation tools so that they could be used in the proposed framework. However, owing to a lack of attention to this subject, almost no acceptable criteria have been established so far.

Therefore, a comprehensive list of existing AI-powered translation tools was compiled. Each tool was analyzed, and its features were extracted. Finally, a checklist of features was created based on these analyses.

This step was undertaken to develop the initial phase of the framework to assist translation instructors in selecting AI-powered translation tools according to their linguistic and non-linguistic requirements.

3.2. Identifying principles for the complementary phase

To enhance the precision of the framework, a complementary phase was added, emphasizing the need for a systematic teaching process. To this end, numerous studies in the field of education and learning have been reviewed to identify principles that could contribute to a more systematized teaching process. Fundamental principles were then introduced to help instructors select the most compatible tools from among those approved in the first phase.

4. Framework proposal and discussion

The framework was developed to balance linguistic and technical factors with pedagogical considerations. This ensures that the tool is not only linguistically and technically suitable but also aligned with the instructor's educational objectives. The two phases of the framework are as follows.

4.1. Preliminary phase

Because of several limitations, it is challenging to determine the exact number of available AI-powered translation tools. First, continuous developments in AI have led to the emergence of new tools that make

it difficult to track them. Second, some AI-powered tools are not highly publicized as translation tools but can still offer translation services, which makes the boundaries even more blurred. Third, some translation tools rely on APIs from major providers; in other words, several programs may seem to function differently, of course on the surface, while employing the same underlying AI technology. In addition, an AI-powered translation tool might have been developed but not yet publicly documented; such a tool may be integrated into internal systems or offered exclusively to specific clients and not to the public.

However, through extensive searches, Twenty-eight AI-powered translation tools were identified (see a list in the Appendix). Although all these tools primarily fall under the general category of AI-powered, which means they rely on AI to enhance their performance, a few of them are generative AI, which means they were not built exclusively for translation, yet they offer professional translation-related services that have been increasingly utilized by translation and language users worldwide.

These tools were categorized into two main groups based on their features.

A. Tools with almost no or little pedagogical value in the Iranian educational context (twenty-three tools)

    - Tools that neither support Persian nor offer free plans
    - Tools that are free but do not support Persian
    - Tools that support Persian but are available on paid plans either from the outset or after a free trial with a limited word count; and
    - Tools that, despite supporting Persian and being free, have limited accessibility due to sanctions or filtering.

B. Tools with potential pedagogical value in the Iranian educational context (five tools). These tools meet all the necessary requirements: they support Persian, are free, readily accessible, and allow seamless integration into translation pedagogy. However, they must be checked for compatibility with translation quality standards.

The output of AI-powered tools may not fully adhere to the translation quality standards, which aligns with the rationale behind organizing training courses for human translators in the present era, in which, despite advancements in AI, high-quality translations still require human oversight and intervention to ensure compliance with established standards (See Wang, 2023). The degree to which these standards are met by any of these tools can be used as a criterion for selecting the best tool.

Throughout the preliminary phase, a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic factors, including environmental constraints related to economic and political issues, in addition to technical issues related

to translation quality standards, encompassing key aspects such as accuracy, consistency, readability, and cultural appropriateness (See Waddington, 2001) were considered.

4.2. Complementary phase

The preliminary phase is essential, but it cannot guarantee the selection of the most appropriate AI-powered translation tool, as it only considers the general aspects of translation teaching and does not address the features that focus on ensuring effective teaching practices. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a second phase at a more advanced level. Since instruction, in order to be effective, must be grounded in epistemological and psychological approaches to teaching and learning, which serve to enhance instructional design (See Fardanesh, 2023; Schunk, 2019; Olson, 2015; Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009; Siemens, 2005a; Siemens, 2005b), such consideration seems to be intrinsic to the systematic organization of an educational framework. In addition, structuring instruction based on learning theories while integrating AI into translation training will lead to a significant improvement in students' translation quality compared to when translation training consists of scattered activities of merely selecting texts and teaching translation techniques (Khalili, in press). In fact, the two phases are related in such a way that from among the tools approved in the first phase, the one that best aligns with the features of the adopted approach is selected. This means that the tool is not only linguistically and technically suitable but also pedagogically aligned with the instructor's educational objectives.

The fundamental psychological and epistemological approaches to education are outlined below, each with the potential to branch into various approaches.

Historically, four main psychological approaches have guided the learning and teaching processes: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism (Eskandari et al., 2010). Behaviorism, rooted in the epistemological approach of positivism, posits that learning strengthens the association between behavior and its consequences through conditioning (Razavi, 2011; Fardanesh, 2023). Behaviorists emphasize observable and measurable behaviors (Razavi, 2011; Fardanesh, 2023). In this view, learners are passive individuals who adapt to their environments. The learning path is precisely defined and linear, with learners receiving feedback throughout the process (Razavi, 2011; Fardanesh, 2023).

In cognitivism, grounded in interpretive epistemology, the emphasis shifts from overt learner behavior to internal mental processes, such as perception, acquisition, processing, storage, retrieval, and recall of information (Razavi, 2011; Driscoll, 2014; Fardanesh, 2023). Learners are active participants who construct knowledge by integrating new information with prior learning, thereby shaping their cognitive structure (Razavi, 2011; Driscoll, 2014; Fardanesh, 2023). In fact, cognitivism came into being as a response to behaviorism, which ignored the inner workings of the mind (Downes, 2006).

Constructivism, rooted in critical epistemology, asserts that knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed by learners through interaction with the social and cultural environment (Driscoll, 2014). Learners create meaning by refining their mental representations of the world based on their

experiences (Fardanesh, 2023). Similar to cognitivism, constructivism has been developed to tackle the limitations of behaviorism (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009) with an emphasis on situated cognition and the importance of context (Kanselaar, 2002).

Connectivism, a more recent psychological theory grounded in the epistemology of connective or distributed knowledge, was first introduced by George Siemens in 2004 and later developed by both Siemens and Stephen Downes (Eskandari et al., 2010) in response to the gaps in the traditional learning theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism regarding learning in the digital era (Siemens, 2005a). Here, learning involves creating nodes that can be ideas, people, or non-human resources, and linking them together to form networks (Siemens, 2005a; Siemens, 2005b; Downes, 2006; Downes, 2007). Learning occurs when individuals expand and navigate these networks using technology (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009). From this perspective, a search engine, a printed book, a friend, etc., are all potential nodes that learners can draw from (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009). Interestingly, each learner is also considered a node for fellow learners (Siemens 2005b).

Based on behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, learning occurs purely inside a learner, which means that these approaches ignore the type of learning stored and manipulated by technology and the fact that learning may reside in non-human appliances (Siemens, 2005a). Moreover, behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism belong to an era prior to the emergence of advanced digital technologies, which implies that these approaches may not be able to address all intricacies of learning in the digital era (Siemens, 2005a). Of course, it is worth mentioning that connectivism contains traces of all previous learning theories (behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism) as it has been built upon them in response to the needs of the digital age. However, the fact that it relies on connective or distributed knowledge sets it apart as a unique learning theory, with a distinct epistemological foundation (Eskandari et al., 2010; Barnett et al., 2013).

Which of these teaching approaches will be adopted by the translation instructor depends on the course's educational objectives and requirements. Based on what the instructor has in mind, one of these approaches (any offshoot) or an eclectic approach can be used to systematize the teaching process.

It must be mentioned that several studies have explored topics related to translation based on learning theories so far. Kiraly (2000) used several classroom case studies to illustrate how a social constructivist approach could improve translation training. Varney (2009) compared constructivist approaches to effective learning with other prevalent trends in translator education offering insightful suggestions for an educational philosophy tailored to translation courses. Ching-Chung et al. (2011) proposed a model for teaching undergraduate translation courses based on the principles derived from behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Liu (2018) proposed a new pedagogical model for translation training based on the principles of constructivism emphasizing the importance of cultivating students' cognitive abilities. Pourfarhad et al. (2018) investigated translation strategies emerged in behaviorist, cognitive and constructivist approaches towards teaching translation. Dan and Shuyi (2019) explored the effectiveness of a translation workshop model in tourism translation based on the principles of behaviorism. Hosseini

et al. (2020) investigated the implementation of the principles of social constructivism in undergraduate translator training programs in Iran. Ruiz Blanco (2024) demonstrated how the use of websites, as it is suggested in constructivism and connectivism, in translation education can foster learners' essential, practical skills for future professional carriers. Nonetheless, few studies have focused on connectivism as a digital age learning theory. Zeytinkaya (2021), focusing on the principles of connectivism, emphasized the integration of cloud-based translation tools rather than traditional CAT tools into translation training to meet the needs of the future translators. Khalili (in press) demonstrated that implementing the principles of connectivism in translation training led to a significant improvement in the quality of learners' translations. In fact, the existence of such studies focusing on learning theories shows that translation education is not detached from this core aspect of education in general.

Overall, the framework is structured as follows.

- The first phase: evaluating practicality of the tools based on the considered criteria (linguistic and non-linguistic including technical features), and

- The second phase: assessing the compatibility of the tools approved in the previous phase with features of the instructor's chosen psychological and epistemological approaches to teaching and learning.

As mentioned earlier, the second phase was added to systematize the teaching process and reassess the suitability and practicality of the tools at a higher level.

Although the proposed framework has several advantages, it also has inherent limitations. The key benefits and limitations of this study are outlined below.

Benefits:

- The framework is sufficiently flexible, allowing instructors to select tools that align with their teaching styles.

- It considers both linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects, including technical and pedagogical features.

- It is specifically designed to align with the unique Iranian educational context, because both political limitations (availability of tools due to filtering or sanctions) and economic constraints (preference for tools that are free) are considered.

Limitations:

- This framework may not be suitable for instructors with specific teaching styles or for those who work under unique circumstances. For instance, one may not prefer prioritizing epistemological and psychological approaches to teaching and learning.

- Because AI-powered tools are continuously evolving and being updated at a rapid pace, there is a need to constantly re-evaluate them, which means that using this framework only once at the beginning of the course does not imply that the selected tool will remain the best option throughout the entire course.

- It is not easy to find a tool that fully aligns with the features of the chosen psychological and epistemological approach, which can make the entire process more complex.

Overall, this framework was designed to provide a potential method for selecting AI-powered translation tools that align with both linguistic and technical requirements as well as pedagogical considerations. Although it is tailored to the specific needs of translation instructors and learners in Iran, its applicability may vary depending on the teaching context and the dynamic nature of AI tools.

5. Conclusion

This article presents a framework that focuses on both linguistic and technical criteria, as well as pedagogical approaches to offer a balanced strategy for evaluating and selecting AI-powered translation tools. The framework was designed in two phases to assist instructors in making concrete decisions aligned with their teaching styles and Iran's unique educational context. The first phase involved establishing linguistic and technical criteria by reviewing available literature and compiling a list of AI-powered translation tools. A checklist was created to help instructors to select tools based on these criteria. In the second phase, existing psychological and epistemological approaches to teaching and learning were set as benchmarks against which tools that were approved in the previous stage must be re-evaluated so that the best tool can be selected.

The framework offers significant advantages, such as flexibility and adaptability to different teaching styles, yet it has its own limitations; for instance, it might not be compatible with certain teaching contexts, or the fact that the tools must be re-evaluated constantly as AI tools evolve at a rapid pace. Nevertheless, the framework serves as a valuable resource for instructors, as it guides them towards making more effective decisions while utilizing AI-powered translation tools in their classrooms. Below, suggestions can be found for future research:

- Incorporating additional criteria for evaluating and selecting AI-powered translation tools into this framework.

- Engaging experienced translation instructors in evaluating the framework to offer feedback for any refinement.

- Identifying the challenges and operational barriers to implementing this framework in real educational settings to clarify its practical applications.

- Examining the long-term effects of using this framework to improve the quality of translation teaching and learning.

In conclusion, although AI-powered translation tools may have been primarily designed for commercial purposes rather than educational objectives, translation instructors must effectively integrate these tools into their lesson planning instead of relying solely on traditional methods, which is exactly what the requirements of the modern era demand.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Appendix

List of AI-driven translation tools[1]

No.	AI-driven tools
1.	Matecat
2.	Google Translate
3.	Microsoft Bing Translator
4.	Yandex translate
5.	IBM Watson Language Translation
6.	Papago
7.	Taia
8.	ImTranslator
9.	Translatepress
10.	memoQ AGT
11.	Crowdin
12.	Apple Translate
13.	DeepL
14.	EdApp
15.	Amazon Translate
16.	Smartling
17.	Wordly.ai
18.	Sonix
19.	Sistran
20.	Reverso
21.	Unbabel
22.	Mirai Translate

[1]. Last modified April 2024 [*Any modifications made to these tools after the data collection period are beyond the scope of this study*]

23.	TextUnited
24.	Lokalise
25.	iTranslate
26.	ChatGPT *[2]
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"Were Comfort Women Voluntarily Employed?": Fact-Checking of Harvard Professor's Denial of War Crime

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Abstract

In December 2021, Harvard Law School Professor J. Mark Ramseyer published a paper denying Japan's war crimes during World War II in the *International Review of Law and Economics* (IRLE). In this paper, he claimed that 'comfort women' were voluntarily employed prostitutes under the terms of a contract. By employing textual analysis of news articles and academic papers dealing with Ramseyer's claims, this study investigated how South Korean journalists and global scholars have fact-checked and verified Ramseyer's paper and his claims. Two groups adjudicated the truthfulness of Ramseyer's claims and unmistakably declared his claims as "false." Ramseyer's paper serves as a valuable case for both global journalists and scholars to unite and take action to verify false and misleading claims. This movement presents the possibility that collaborative fact-checking between journalists and scholars can be utilized and employed for other global issues.

Keywords

Comfort Women, fact-checking, South Korea, war crime, objectivity, journalism

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1. Introduction

On January 28, 2021, Japan's newspaper, Sankei Shimbun, published an abstract from an academic paper by Harvard Law School Professor of Japanese Legal Studies, J. Mark Ramseyer (Lee, 2021, February 9; Kim & Levien, 2021, March 8). The paper discussed the issue of "comfort women" (from neighboring Asian countries, in particular Korea, a colony of Japan), who provided sexual services to Japanese soldiers during World War II. In this paper. Ramseyer claimed that comfort women were "not coerced, but voluntarily employed under the terms of a contract" and, therefore, chose to work as prostitutes, not as sex slaves by the Japanese military (Kim & Levien, 2021, February 7). His paper was published online in the *International Review of Law and Economics* (IRLE) on December 1, 2020 and was set to be published in the 'March of 2021' print issue of the journal.

After *Sankei Shimbun*'s report, South Korean news outlets rushed to report this issue as breaking news. Korean journalists presented Ramseyer's paper is a provocation to deny historical facts about Japan's war crimes. Since then, academic scholars in the discipline of Asian Studies and History as well as global journalists have scrutinized Ramseyer's paper. It was also found that, on the 12th of January 2021, Ramseyer already contributed an opinion column denying sex slaves and war crimes by the Japanese military to *Japan Forward*, an English-language site by *Sankei Shimbun*. In this column, Ramseyer stated:

> The claims about enslaved Korean comfort women are historically untrue. The Japanese army did not allow Korean women to work in their brothels. Korean women were not used as sex slaves in this study. The claims to the contrary are simply—factually false. (Ramseyer, 2021, January 12)

His column implied that comfort women were not victims of war crimes but rather liars who made unfair accusations against the Japanese military.

Korean media's intense reporting of Ramseyer's research paper resulted in news reports of Ramseyer's paper by Western media, such as *The New York Times*, *CNN*, and *The Guardian*. These reports ignited outrage among academic scholars and human rights activists, as well as accusations of his warped interpretations of historical documents and insufficient evidence. During an unprecedented investigation of Ramseyer's paper, there was a worldwide and extensive fact-checking effort of theories, judgments, logic, and historical materials utilized in his paper, as well as Ramseyer's claims. Specifically, the global fact-checking phenomenon in Ramseyer's paper was spearheaded by two groups: South Korean journalists and Western scholars.

The present study on this fact-checking drive is significant in several respects. First, Ramseyer's paper is a rare case in which both journalists and scholars vigorously discredit false and misleading claims in an academic paper. This study examined how a collaborative fact-checking effort between journalists and scholars was performed in the case of comfort women. Second, fact-checking of Ramsey's paper can serve as a great opportunity to restore trust in academia, science, and journalism in an era of the post-truth where feelings and preconceived biases play a more important role in individuals' opinions and decision making than objective facts (McIntyre, 2018). Although scientists, academics, and journalists have largely

been regarded as conveyers of truth, they have also been viewed as passive seekers of truth and, sometimes, manipulators of information to their benefit. Third, this study reveals the ways in which objectivity, as a basic value of fact-checking journalism, was applied in the fact-checking of Ramseyer's paper.

Overall, this study seeks to examine the global fact-checking movement of Ramseyer's paper by journalists and scholars in early 2021, when the truthfulness and accuracy of Ramseyer's claims began to surface. Specifically, it investigates how journalists and scholars conducted fact-checking and verification of Ramseyer's paper. In addition, it explores the types of approaches and methods used in the implementation of fact-checking.

2. Literature review

2.1. Crisis of journalism and information pollution

When it comes to the idea of informed citizens, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 8) stated that "political information is to democratic politics what money is to economics: it is the currency of citizenship". In short, news media are crucial institutions for the functioning of modern democracy because they play a pivotal role not only in informing citizens of public issues and policies, but also in the building of a social consensus (Katz, 1996). News media has been a kind of window in the world (Lippmann 1922).

Journalism refers to "a set of transparent, independent procedures aimed at gathering, verifying and reporting truthful information of consequence to citizens in a democracy" (Craft & Davis, 2016, p. 58). It facilitates democracy by providing citizens with factual and trustworthy information. In other words, journalism's primary role is to provide reliable and truthful information. Due to this responsibility, news media outlets, as an executor of journalism, have remained one of the most influential institutions in modern society (Ekstrom, Lewis, & Westlund, 2020). Without the creation and operation of healthy journalism institutions, our world could have been significantly damaged by a lack of verified, reliable, and factual information.

In recent decades, various factors have amplified the crisis of journalism. In a 2017 report titled "The information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making," Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) expressed their concern about the phenomenon of "information pollution at a global scale" due to the rapid connectivity made possible by the present digital media environment. They noted three kinds of "information disorder: mis-information, [in] which false information is shared but no harm is meant; dis-information, when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm, [and] malinformation, when genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere" (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017, p. 5).

2.2. Fact-checking movement and objectivity

Basically, fact-checking refers to "the practice of systematically publishing assessments of the validity of claims made by public officials and institutions with an explicit attempt to identify whether a claim is factual" (Walter et al., 2019, p. 351). In recent decades, fact-checking of information has emerged as a professional discipline of journalism vigorously implemented by journalists and news media outlets (Graves, 2016). Fact-checking journalism has adopted and developed "an evidence-based method for assessing political claims' (Coddington, Molyneux, & Lawrence, 2014, p. 392).

To understand the concept of fact-checking in journalism, the idea of 'objectivity' needs to be carefully understood. The idea of objectivity assumes that "'Reality' is singular, a priori, and objective. It exists independently of its knower" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 5). According to the positivist paradigm, not only is there a clear division between objectivity and subjectivity, but knowledge can also be acquired through observations of reality (Wien, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Furthermore, the methods used in studies of natural phenomena can also be employed in studies of social phenomena (Lindlof & Taylor 2011). Finally, objectivity serves as a crucial component of empiricism and rationalism under the tradition of positivism (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). During the 1920s, when the term objectivity emerged in the field of journalism, objectivity mainly referred to "finding the truth through the rigorous methodology of the scientist" (Streckfuss, 1990, p. 975). However, gradually, it "had shrunk from a methodology needed to preserve democracy to a practical posture of day-to-day production' (pp. 982-983).

2.3. Procedural and scientific objectivity

Regarding the discipline of journalism, there are "two modes of objectivity that underlie daily mainstream news: one hand and the fact-checking genre on the other" (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 393). The first mode of objectivity is 'professional objectivity,' which is one of the most cherished values in the history of journalism (Schudson, 2001; Coddington et al., 2014). The concept of professional objectivity proposes that journalists focus only on facts and not on personal bias and subjective judgment (Schudson, 2001). In this context, journalism has espoused the values of neutrality, balance, and impartiality as criteria to distinguish the profession of journalists from other occupations (Lawrence & Schafer, 2012).

In particular, due to its emphasis on the concept of neutrality, professional objectivity is largely in line with "the 'he said, she said' reporting style that studiously quotes the claims of two sides of a dispute, leaving the reader to determine the truth of the matter, even for verifiable factual issues" (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 393; Pingree, 2011). Lawrence and Schafer (2012) called this professional objectivity as a 'procedural objectivity' which enables "superficial 'fairness' in which reporters simply report what spokespeople from either side of the political aisle are saying without clarifying for the public the veracity of those statements" (p. 769).

Due to the tradition of professional/procedural objectivity in the field of journalism, reporters are frequently reluctant to adjudicate factual arguments or disagreements (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003). Consequently, the 'he said/she said' style of professional objectivity can not only "leave journalists and the public more vulnerable to the efforts of powerful industries or ill-formed activists to 'manufacture uncertainty' about science", but also "frustrate political accountability, as reporters 'balance' the charges and countercharges of political opponents to the detriment of public understanding" (Lawrence & Schafer, 2012, pp. 69-770). This professional/procedural objectivity has led to "passive, neutral reporting of contradictory factual claims" (Pingree, 2011, p. 22).

On the other hand, the second mode of objectivity is 'scientific/substantive objectivity' which refers to a procedure of debunking the claim and adjudicating explicitly what is true and what is false (Coddington et al., 2014; Lawrence & Schafer, 2012). Unlike professional/procedural objectivity with an emphasis on "both-sides balance" and "neutrality," the mode of scientific objectivity is "built instead on the scientific method, with its process of testing hypotheses and then drawing—and declaring—conclusions based on the weight of evidence" (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 393). Overall, in modern journalism, the mode of scientific/substantive objectivity is less prominent than professional/procedural objectivity. However, as the genre of fact-checking journalism has been gaining popularity in many nations owing to the post-truth trend, the mode of scientific objectivity has been widely accepted as a basic philosophy of verification by fact-checking journalists.

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010, p. 175), the verification of facts is the most important function of journalism, and thus, in the current digital media environment, characterized by information overload and an influx of false information, journalists should distinguish "what is believable and accurate amid the growing array of arguments coming at us from all sides". Pingree (2011) called fact-checking journalism as one type of "active journalism" which seeks to adjudicate the accuracy/falsity of factual claims by finding evidence supporting them as well as facts.

2.4. Global boom in fact-checking journalism

By defining the role of journalists as to "not only report fact, but publicly decide it", fact-checking journalists with a spirit of 'scientific objectivity' distinguish themselves from journalists with a spirit of 'professional objectivity' in mainstream media (Graves, 2013, p. 18). Rather than "end[ing] up serving as a megaphone for misleading claims", these fact-checking journalists seek to "offer a continual corrective and challenge to daily news" (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 394). In this regard, fact checking is "an embodiment of scientific objectivity rather than professional objectivity' (Coddington, et al., 2014, p. 394).

It has now become more important than at any other time in history that journalists and news outlets verify facts and information. Thus, distinguishing between true and false information has emerged as an important mission of journalism. In the end, these circumstances have prompted the advent of scientific/substantive objectivity as a method of verifying the idea of professional objectivity, which

emphasizes the values of neutrality and balance. As a result, fact-checking news organizations, such as PolitiFact, FactCheck, and *The Washington Post*'s Fact Checker, have surfaced since 2000 and are playing the role of "adjudicating factual disputes" (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003). The practice of fact-checking has gradually become a pivotal genre of journalism, as fact-checking has been adopted by many news organizations (Graves, 2016). This study seeks to examine how South Korean journalists and global scholars, as fact-checkers of historic facts, verified and adjudicated claims from Ramseyer's paper.

3. Method

This study employed qualitative textual analysis. The texts to be analyzed in this study fall into three categories: (1) Ramseyer's paper entitled "Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War"; (2) South Korea's fact-checking news articles published promptly after the publication of Ramseyer's paper; (3) academic scholars' critiques or responses toward Ramseyer's paper and claims. By analyzing these texts, this study investigated how journalists and scholars verified Ramseyer's paper and claims. It examined not only how they fact-checked Ramseyer's claims but also what kinds of methods journalists and scholars employed in their verification of his claims.

This study identified three basic elements—claims, evidence, and judgments—of fact checking derived from scientific methods (Graves, 2016). First, claims refer to "verifiable statements in the realm of fact' (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 394). Second, evidence denotes material or something "with which to evaluate the claim, often relying on a mixture of documents and experts and privileging information from official government and nonpartisan sources" (Coddington et al., 2014, p. 394). Third, judgments represent an explicit adjudication of whether a claim is true or false. Thus, judgments are the fact-checkers' final conclusions of the claim.

4. The findings

4.1. Claims by Harvard professor Mark Ramseyer

Ramseyer's paper was published online by *the International Review of Law and Economics* (IRLE) on December 1, 2020.

Claims: In this paper, Ramseyer (2020, p. 7) asserted that Korean comfort women were not forced to serve as sexual slaves by the Japanese military because "The contracts themselves followed basic game theoretic principles of credible commitments".

Evidence: As evidence for this voluntary 'prostitution' contract between brothels and young women, Ramseyer presents a memoir of one Korean woman named "Mun Ok-ju" who wrote in her diary, "I know that all the soldiers put their earnings in the saving accounts in the field post office, so I decided to put my money in the saving account" (p. 6). He adds that Mun "seems to have done well most flamboyantly." He quoted Mun's writing as follows: It was fun to go shopping to rickshaws. I cannot forget the experience

of shopping in a market in Rangoon [in Burma]…I became a popular woman in Rangoon. There were many more officers in Rangoon than near the frontline, so I was invited to many parties. (p. 6).

Judgment: Ramseyer concludes that Korean women cannot be classified as military sex slaves not only since "Knowing that they were headed for the front, women wanted a maximum service length," but also since "Together, the women and brothels concluded indenture contacts that coupled a large advance with one or two year terms" (p. 7). Comfort women are prostitutes who had nothing to do with war crimes committed by the Japanese military.

4.2. Scholars' criticism of Ramseyer's article

After Ramseyer's publication, many scholars sought to verify the facts and accuracy of Ramseyer's paper. Hundreds of scholars endorsed letters criticizing Ramseyer's claims and demanding a retraction of the paper by the journal on grounds of academic misconduct. This study examined the verification results of scholars.

As Ramseyer's article generated uproar among scholars of history, Asian studies, international relations, and sociology, the *Asia-Pacific Journal* published a special issue of "The 'Comfort Women' as Public History" on March 1, 2021. This special issue included nine research articles on comfort women. To verify Ramseyer's claims, this journal also published four letters in "Supplement to Special Issue: Academic Integrity at Stake." Alexis Dudden, the editor of these letters and Professor of History at University of Connecticut, noted that these letters "rebut the Ramseyer article" and "document serious violations of scholarly standards and methods that strike at the heart of academic integrity." This study identifies the claims, evidence, and judgments of several essays and letters.

4.2.1. "Most Egregious Violation of Academic Integrity"

On February 17, 2021, two scholars at Harvard University, Andrew Gordon (Department of History) and Carter Eckert (Department of East Asian Languages and Civilization), announced a letter calling for Ramseyer's original article to be retracted by the journal.

Claims: In this letter, two scholars claimed, "As historians of Japan and Korea, what initially appalled us was Ramseyer's elision of the larger political and economic contexts of colonialism and gender in which the comfort women system was conceived and implemented, and the multiple and brutal ways in which it affected and afflicted the women on a human scale."

Evidence: Ramseyer did not present any actual contracts between comfort women and brothels. They stated, "he has not consulted a single actual contract concluded between a Korean comfort woman, or her family, and a recruiter or a comfort station, or even a sample contract that might have been provided for guidance by the Japanese government or military." They added, "Any reasonable standard of academic integrity would require that Ramseyer state in his article that he does not have access to actual contracts or sample contracts concluded with Korean women in Korea, acknowledge how few third-party

statements he has seen about contracts, and note the limits to what one can learn from those references." Ramsey's article lacks academic value and integrity due to insufficient evidence and biased choice of materials: "there are numerous other serious problems: citations that are wholly unrelated to claims made in the text; claims in the texts of the article entirely at odds with the documents cited to support those claims; selective use of documents and other materials to the exclusion of evidence to the contrary."

Judgments: These scholars evaluated Ramseyer's article as "the most egregious violation of academic integrity in the article" due to "the lack of any discussion of whether he has seen actual or sample contracts" and "the lack of any citation to such contracts."

4.2.2. "Mr. Ramseyer's Paper is Academic Lies"

In an essay entitled "The Abuse of History: A Brief Response to J. Mark Ramseyer's 'Contracting for Sex'", Dudden (2021, p. 1) defined Ramseyer's article as "a regurgitated belief presented with the veneer of scholarly credibility" rather than "an academic effort".

Claims: The existence of contacts cannot justify the war crimes against young girls and women: "Even if there were physical evidence of these 'contracts,' it would be alarming to ascribe it to occurrences of sexual exploitation and extreme violence at any time or any place" (p. 1). It is "shameful" for Ramseyer to deploy the term of contract to "a history that the United Nations and Amnesty International have determined a 'crime against humanity'" (p. 1). Ramseyer's article seems to "advocate a current Japanese political ideology" which is "racially essentialist, revanchist, and history denying" (p. 2). She stated, "certain political interests in Japan are already using Ramseyer's article to advance their view" (p. 2).

Evidence: There are "clear flaws with evidence and referencing" (p. 1). Ramseyer's article is "race-baiting" due to "its myopic focus on Koreans" (p.1). Dudden (2021) stated, "behind a veil of seemingly rational economic theory to prove a point unprovable because the evidence is absent, the article recycles base, racially charged dog whistles for those listening" (p. 2). In his paper, Ramseyer wrote, "(the women) could shirk or take the money and run" and "(the women) earned considerably more than they would earn in other employment" (p. 2). However, he did not analyze "the first known legal record of victims of this historical crime—and, most important, the conditions of their victimization" (p. 2).

Judgments: Ramseyer's claims were not tolerated in terms of academic freedom. Dudden (2021) stated, "Academic freedom is a core tenet of constitutional democracies, yet academic lies are not." Dudden adjudicated that Ramseyer's claims were equal to academic lies and justified the Japanese military's wartime system of sexual slavery.

4.2.3. International historians' rebuttal of Ramseyer's paper

In an article submitted to the *Asia-Pacific Journal*, a group of international historians—Amy Stanley of Northwestern University, Hannah Shepherd of Cambridge University, Sayaka Chatani of Harvard University, David Ambaras of North Carolina State University, and Chelsea Szendi Schieder of Aoyama

Gakuin University—stated, "As historians of Japan and its empire, we were shocked by this claim, because there has been an overwhelming amount of academic work that supports survivors' testimony that they were held captive in 'comfort stations' (ianjo) that were patronized by the Japanese military during World War II" (Stanley et al., 2021, p. 1).

Claims: These scholars stated, "Its inaccuracies are more than superficial errors; they completely undermine the article's claims. Indeed, if the sources were accurately portrayed, the argument would collapse. For this reason, we believe that the article should be retracted" (p. 2).

Evidence: In their paper, these scholars sought to reveal "the distortions and misrepresentations of sources" found in Ramseyer's article. They stated,' There are two factual claims that are fundamental to this [Mr. Ramseyer] Argument. First, there were contractual agreements between women and brothel keepers that paid large cash advances to women. The other is that women in brothels could leave early if they earned out by paying off their loans and debts. Neither is supported by the evidence Ramseyer uses; in fact, in some cases the evidence he cites directly contradicts these claims" (p. 2).

4.2.3.1. Failure to acknowledge an absence of evidence

Ramseyer's article claims that there were signed contracts of consenting prostitution between comfort women and brothel keepers. However, Stanley et al. (2021) stated, "Without any evidence of signed contracts for either women in the 'comfort station' system or Korean prostitutes in general, it is difficult to assess or credit an argument that is primarily about contracting for labor" (pp. 3-4).

4.2.3.2. Use of evidence from primary sources

Ramseyer presented the story of a Japanese girl (named Osaki) who worked at a brothel at the age of ten. Ramsey wrote in his paper, "When Osaki turned ten, a recruiter stopped by and offered her 300 yen upfront if she would agree to go abroad. The recruiter did not try to trick her even at age 10, she knew what the job entailed." However, Stanley et al. (2021) argued, "Osaki's testimony, recorded in Yamazaki Tomoko's book 'Sandakan hachiban no shokan,' which Ramseyer cites, reveals precisely the opposite" (p. 4). Osaki described her experiences in this book as follows: "You brought us here without mentioning that kind of work, and now you tell us to take customers. You liar...we were terrified" (p. 4). These scholars stated that Ramseyer "omits the full context of the sentence" and mischaracterized Yamazaki Tomoko's book. They concluded, "A full and accurate portrayal of the evidence from Osaki's testimony contradicts every one of the contentions that is central to Ramseyer's arguments" (p. 5).

4.2.3.3. Use of evidence from secondary sources

Ramseyer selectively used secondary sources for "facts while disregarding other factual claims that weaken his argument, ignoring the authors' argument, and, in fact, asserting the opposite of their findings" (Stanley et al., 2021, p. 17). Ramseyer cited Kim and Kim (2018). However, the descriptions by Kim and

Kim (2018) refute Ramseyer's claim: "In Korea, the Kenpei, which were the (Japanese) military police, featured alongside the civilian police [in the regulation of licensed prostitution]. Rather, Kenpei directed civilian police and regulated the everyday lives of the people, including managing their sexual practices. Here, we can see the distinguishing feature of the colonial administration of Korea, which was that it was essentially under the management of the Japanese army" (pp. 16-17). This shows the involvement of the Japanese military in the recruitment of comfort women.

4.2.3.4. Inaccurate and inappropriate citation

Stanley et al. (2021) stated, "There are a number of problems with Ramseyer's citation practices, including inaccurate page numbers, incomplete citations, citations to large page ranges or entire books without more specific information, missing sources, and citations to irrelevant sources" (p. 18). They added, "we also believe that the number of miscitations in Ramseyer's article is indicative of the poor quality of the scholarship, which fails to meet disciplinary standards in history, but also falls short of academic expectations more generally" (p. 18).

Judgments: Stanley et al. (2021) stated, "some of the examples below—including the mischaracterization of Osaki's and Mun Ok-ju's testimony, the failure to acknowledge the absence of relevant sample or actual contracts, and unmarked citations to national blogs and historically revisionist websites—transgress standard of scholarly integrity that are widely shared across all academic disciplines" (p. 3). For these reasons, we believe that an article containing this level of academic misconduct should not have passed peer review, or have been published in an academic journal" (p. 21).

4.3. South Korean journalists' fact-checking

South Korean news outlets covered Ramseyer's paper. Under the catchphrase of "Fact-Check," they verified his paper and claims. In South Korea, around the 2017 presidential election, fact-checking journalism boomed. Many outlets have introduced a variety of fact-checking projects and techniques to revive the public's trust in journalism.

4.3.1. Yonhap News Agency: "Mr. A Ramseyer's Claim is Not True"

In February 2021, Yonhap News Agency (YNA), South Korea's national news agency, published an article fact-checking Ramseyer's paper. The article's first sentence is "A paper by an American scholar who defined comfort women as 'prostitutes' is causing disturbance."

Claims: Ramseyer claimed that comfort women were able to make money by contracting according to their will. According to Ramseyer, comfort women can quit their jobs if they want to. In short, the Japanese government has not forced women into prostitution.

Evidence: YNA verified Ramseyer's claims using official announcements from the Japanese government, Japanese literature, and interviews with researchers. YNA (2021, February 5) stated, "The former Japanese military and the Japanese government were involved in the establishment and operation of comfort stations by requesting companies to recruit them, and the Japanese government acknowledged that there was coercion in the comfort women work since the 1990s." It stressed a statement on comfort women by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on August 4, 1993. In this statement, Kono stated, "Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women."

YNA cited "A Study on the Status and Role of Japanese Military Comfort Station Providers" (2018), an article by Kang Jeong-suk, a researcher at the Institute for East Asian History at Sungkyunkwan University. Kang stated that, according to the Japanese military's document (entitled "A case concerning the women recruitment of an army comfort station within the Shanghai dispatch force," January 19, 1938), subordinate agencies under the Japanese government moved to select contractors in Japan and mobilize women at the request of the Japanese military stationed in China. In addition, according to the Japanese military document of the "Naval Comfort Station Usage Regulations of the 12th Special Base Command of the Navy" dated March 18, 1945, the recruiters rented the comfort station building free of charge from the military and were directly paid for using the comfort station after deducting other expenses.

One claim by Ramseyer is that not only could comfort women work under a formal contract but they could also quit if they wanted to do so. YNA interviewed Dr. Myung-sook Yoon, an expert on the issue of comfort women in South Korea, and acting director of the Japanese Military Comfort Women Research Institute at the Korea Women's Human Rights Promotion Agency. Yoon said, "Previous research shows that Korean women were taken away through employment fraud, human trafficking, or kidnapping in nearly 90% of cases." Yoon asked, "In such a situation, who would have signed a contract (working as a comfort woman)?"

Judgments: YNA adjudicated that Ramseyer's claims were incorrect. YNA stated, "with the Japanese government acknowledging that the Japanese military was directly involved in the operation of the comfort stations and that living in the comfort stations was compulsory, professor Ramseyer's claim—it was not the government that forced prostitution—is to ascribe a responsibility of war crime to private contractors, denying the culpability of the Japanese military." It added, "Even if it were the contractors who directly forced comfort women, the Japanese military, who was behind the contractors and could understand the circumstance, should be viewed as an 'accomplice' or an 'abettor'."

4.3.2. JTBC: "Comfort Women are not Prostitutes"

JTBC is South Korea's nationwide television network. On February 2, 2021, the JTBC reported on Ramseyer's paper in its evening news program. The reporter stated, 'The key argument is that the comfort

women were not forced to be taken away but were prostitutes who voluntarily entered into a contract and followed them' (Choi, 2021, February. 2).

Claims: Ramseyer's article contains two claims. First, it was the civilian recruiters in Korea who tricked the women into taking them, not the Japanese military or government. Second, Ramseyer argued that comfort women were paid as much as they worked with their consent of the comfort women, and they could quit if they earned enough money.

Evidence: The JTBC presented a kind of transit certificate issued by the Japanese military in 1940 when private contractors brought comfort women to Japan's comfort stations. According to JTBC, the purpose of this certificate is clear: "Comfort women are essential to comforting the troops, so there should be no difficulty when crossing the sea." In short, this document proves the forced mobilization of the Japanese military. In addition, "there are many evidence and testimonies that can prove the forced mobilization," JTBC stated. JTBC also mentioned Japan's district court decision that "The comfort women system is a grave human rights violation equivalent to the atrocities of the Nazis."

Judgments: JTBC emphasized that "Nowhere in Mr. Ramseyer's article was there to refute or argue against the human rights violations of comfort women." It also added, "There is nothing new or confirmed in Mr. Ramseyer's paper."

4.3.3. Newstof, "Historical Documents Refute Ramseyer's Claim"

On March 5, 2021, Newstof, an online news site, reported, "Ramseyer referred to the place, where the comfort women lived, as Brothel, and defined comfort women as 'contractual prostitutes' rather than sex slaves" (Lee, 2021, March 5).

Claims: Ramseyer stated that comfort women were prostitutes, based on a rational contractual relationship. Thus, in Ramseyer's view, comfort women are not sex slaves. However, historical documents have refuted the claim that comfort women are contract prostitutes.

Evidence: Newstof fact-checked whether the Japanese military had any involvement in the comfort women's system. According to the "Oral Testimonies of Japanese Military Comfort Women Victims" (2016), published by Professor Taeheon Jeong of Korea University's Institute of Korean History and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in South Korea, there was a testimony by the late Moon Ock-Ju regarding comfort women's suffering. Moon stated that she had to deal with 20 to 30 soldiers a day and sometimes was stabbed by a drunken soldier.

There are also many documents proving that the Japanese military intervened directly in the operation of comfort women. On January 11, 1992, Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a professor at Japan Central University, publicized a journal, titled "Yukjimil Daeilgi," which was found in the library of the Defense Research Institute at the Japan Defense Agency. This journal contains detailed records of the Japanese military's direct involvement in the establishment and control of the comfort women's system. For example,

according to a note titled "Recruitment of Comfort Women at Military Comfort Stations," prepared by the Japanese Ministry of the Army on March 4, 1938, a high-ranking official of the Japanese Ministry of the Army supervised comfort stations. In recruiting comfort women, this official also advocated for close cooperation between the local and military police.

Judgments: Ramseyer asserted that the Japanese military had nothing to do with the recruitment and control of comfort women. He also claimed that comfort women were contract workers through voluntary agreements. These claims are false. "The comfort women were taken to a comfort station without knowing anything about wages and working conditions, and had to live in sexual slavery under controlled conditions," Newstof concludes.

4.3.4. SBS, "Is This Really a Harvard Article?"

Kim Su-Hyung, a Washing D.C.-based correspondent at SBS, wrote a "World Report" column on Ramseyer's article (2021, February 22). Kim noted, "As Professor Ramseyer of Harvard distorts the history about the comfort women victims, the truth battle of the American academic community is progressing in a unique and meaningful way. American history, law, economics, and other related fields are in full swing, and scholars' statements and reports are continuously coming out on this issue."

Claims: Ramseyer described the comfort woman victim, Moon Ok-ju, "as a person who made a prostitution contract with the operator of the comfort station, earning a lot of money, saving quite a bit, and ate and lived well." Ramseyer added, "Of all the Korean comfort women who left accounts, Mun Ok-ju seems to have done well most *flamboyantly*" (emphasis added). Regarding this, Kim stated, "The fact that a scholar wrote this expression in his thesis is shocking. If a broadcast reporter interviewed a war victim, cut the context in this way, and broadcast it, I think it would be difficult to maintain a journalistic job any longer."

Evidence: Kim stated, "The rebuttals by Harvard Professors Andrew Gordon and Carter Ackert are so powerful that they could defeat Mr. Ramseyer's article with a big blow." In addition, five global scholars—Amy Stanley, Hannah Shepherd, Sayaka Chatani, David Ambaras and Chelsea Szendi Schieder—of Japanese history published a verification report on Ramseyer's article. In particular, the citation related to the comfort woman Moon Ok-Joo is particularly problematic. These scholars found that the citation of Moon by Ramseyer was not an official publication, but merely an English translation of a testimony on an Internet blog. Correspondent Kim stated, "When I followed the actual link, it turned out that this blog was nothing more than a domestic ghost site that collected several articles degrading the comfort women victims by a far-right person… It was a so-called haunted house blog that was abandoned inactive after posting 39 posts in 2016. Many of the posts were linked to Internet bulletin boards such as DC Inside, as well as to the far-right site widely known as 'Ilbe.' All of the contents deny the truth of the comfort women victims."

In addition, according to Kim, global scholars searched through the book by Morikawa who interviewed Moon Ok-ju. According to their report, the moon was taken to a comfort station in Manchuria in 1940. Moon, a 16-year-old girl, cried all day when she found out that she had become a comfort woman for the first time in Manchuria after being caught in Daegu, South Korea. Moon had to deal with 20 or 30 Japanese soldiers a day. Moon said, "We would be forced to service them too. I cried every day. But as much as I cried, the men kept coming."

Judgments: A Harvard University professor tried to use the Japanese far-right logic as it is and wrote it in the form of an academic article, but the academic community around the world united and fought for the truth. Scholars have confirmed that the painful history of comfort women victims is not a subject of argument, but an immovable fact that has already been acknowledged historically. The scholars' efforts to verify Ramseyer's article serve as a good precedent for how to respond to the deniers of history.

5. Discussions and conclusions

This study found that Ramseyer's claim to deny war crimes during World War II induced the academic community and news media outlets to embark on the fact-checking crusade for the ideals of truth and justice. This is clearly confirmed when one journalist stated, "The truth battle is being waged, as the global allied forces of fact-checking strive for truth day and night" (Kim, 2021, February 22). This study's findings are noteworthy for several reasons.

First, this study found that South Korean journalists and global scholars collaborated closely to verify Ramseyer's claims. On the one hand, South Korean journalists contacted both domestic scholars and renowned scholars overseas to check the truthfulness of Ramseyer's claims, let alone make efforts to locate data and information materials to verify Ramseyer's arguments. In this process, they also approached Ramseyer via email and phone to identify not only the purpose of his study but also how he reached such a conclusion repudiating war crimes by the Japanese military.

On the other hand, global scholars have actively performed verification of Ramseyer's claims by means of conducting their own research on his paper, participating in collaborative projects with other scholars, and accepting interview requests from journalists on the issues of comfort women and Ramseyer's paper. Accordingly, the partnership between journalists and scholars, as detectors of truth and facts, made it possible for the faults and falsity of Ramseyer's claims to be exposed quickly and explicitly. Ultimately, two professional groups' pursuit of truth has contributed to propagating the historical facts related to comfort women and has enhanced the scrutiny of far-right deniers of war crimes.

Second, this study noted two kinds of objectivity: professional/procedural, and scientific. These two groups of journalists and scholars pursue the discovery of truth by maintaining the mind of scientific objectivity, verifying the facts available to them, and repudiating inaccurate, false, and illogical claims. This study examined how journalists practiced "scientific objectivity" (active journalism) and "professional objectivity" (passive journalism) in the case of Ramseyer's claim on comfort women. South

Korean journalists examined in this study actively employed the method of "scientific objectivity' (active journalism) when it comes to their verification of Ramseyer's claims. Under the slogan of "fact-checking journalism," South Korean journalists adjudicated factual arguments on the issue of comfort women as well as Ramseyer's claims. Fact-checking journalists in South Korea explicitly declared in their news articles that Ramseyer's claims contravene the historical facts of Japan's war crimes and thus are unequivocally false. These judgments on Ramseyer's claims show that verifying information based on scientific and logical methods has become an important part of journalism in South Korea. Fact-checking reporting serves as a measure to restore public trust in news media, and has become a significant genre of journalism.

In addition, global scholars played a pivotal role in verifying and fact-checking Ramseyer's claims. They published analytical papers on Ramseyer's claims in academic journals and wrote letters demanding the retraction of his paper by the journal. It should be noted that these scholars were in a good position to scrutinize Ramseyer's claims, since they are experts on the issue of comfort women in the fields of History and Asian Studies. For this reason, their analysis of Ramseyer was not more sophisticated and well-informed. In addition, the review of Ramseyer's claims by these scholars is quite effective and persuasive, since they are highly educated in the employment of scientific research methods and the evaluation of academic papers. Unlike journalists who belong to certain news organizations, scholars are in a good position to collaborate with colleagues in other academic organizations, since the purpose of science is to build and expand knowledge with new ideas and evidence. These circumstances prompted journalists to search for the perspectives and verification results of Ramseyer's claims by scholars and researchers.

It should also be noted that there are some differences in verification and fact-checking between journalists and scholars. First, journalists generally begin to check it when a specific, controversial issue emerges over the veracity of information and claims. They are not experts on that issue and, accordingly, are likely to depend on expert groups such as scholars. At the same time, while journalists may be limited in their knowledge and experience of specific issues, they are responsive to new circumstances and can quickly react to rapidly developing situations. This is largely because news making ultimately involves conveying fact-checking results to the audience promptly after locating controversial issues and judging them quickly. This is a major background of how and why South Korean journalists swiftly moved to fact-check Ramsey's claims immediately after his publication on comfort women was exposed. They have actively tried to find scholars of History and Asian Studies to scrutinize Ramseyer's claims. On the contrary, scholars might have slowly responded to new issues where academic verification and fact-checking are urgently needed. In general, it is likely that scholars' work is more measured and gradual due to the employment of scientific research methods than journalists, who normally produce news content daily and weekly. Scholars tend to have in-depth knowledge of their areas and apply their expertise to verify information and maintain the quality of academic findings.

For these reasons, in the case of Ramseyer's paper and claims on comfort women, global scholars could respond to Ramseyer's paper quite effectively by conducting a sophisticated and extensive analysis and operating a global collaboration network across borders. Their findings and analysis of Ramseyer's paper

were broadly cited and employed in journalists' news articles. This is possible because scholars are an expert group in judging the validity of evidence, evaluating the appropriateness of using academic sources, and assessing the reliability of reasoning and writing.

In conclusion, Ramseyer's paper and his claims served as a valuable case for both global journalists and scholars to vigorously unite and take action to verify false and misleading claims in an academic paper. Simultaneously, this global fact-checking movement on comfort women and historical facts presents the possibility that collaborative fact-checking between journalists and scholars can be attempted and utilized in many other issues, such as climate change, conspiracy theories, and economic injustice. Overall, this study is not an exhaustive study of the global fact-checking of Ramseyer's claims. However, the present study's findings show that the fact-checking and verification process of Ramsey's claims functioned as a great opportunity to restore trust in academia, science, and journalism during a period of post-truth. Overall, both journalists and scholars examined the veracity of information and the validity of evidence in his paper when the truthfulness and accuracy of Ramseyer's claims began to be suspected.

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Communicating Relationship-building in a Transitional Setting: Using Co-cultural and Relational-cultural Theories to Understand the Transition Experiences of International Students

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Abstract

This study attempts to bridge the gap in information between the intercultural communication practices of international students and their experiences in relationship-building during the transitional experience of navigating U.S. higher education. Through a combination of co-cultural communication theory (Orbe, 1998) and Relational-Cultural Theory (Jordan, 2010), this study aims to create a new model through which researchers can situate their understanding of the experiences of international students as they navigate their co-cultural identity and relationship building process in a higher education setting.

Keywords

co-cultural theory, relational-cultural theory, critical thematic analysis, transition

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1. Introduction

International student transition is a relatively well-researched topic, especially in the realm of mental health and student services (e.g., Arthur, 2001; Lértora & Croffie, 2020; Lértora et al., 2017; Lértora & Sullivan, 2019; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Additionally, communication challenges and adaptation strategies of individuals moving into a new culture have also been well explored by researchers (e.g., Dodd, 1998; Ellingsworth, 1977; Gudykunst, 2003; Kim, 2005, 2008; Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013; Owen, 1984). However, the communication strategies employed by international students as they transition into society as co-cultural members (Orbe, 1998) have been relatively unexplored.

Additionally, the relationship-building techniques they employ through communication strategies from a relational-cultural perspective (Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020; Miller, 1976; Miller & Striver, 1997) have largely been unexplored. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring international student communication strategies through the combined lens of co-cultural and relational-cultural theories to better understand how transitional navigation occurs within the context of institutions of higher education.

To study this phenomenon, we examined a set of interviews with international students collected from a previous study that explored intercultural transitions from the perspective of international students. International students, simply by their status as people from another country living in the United States, acquire a co-cultural status (Urban & Orbe, 2007). The reviewed literature draws from areas such as intercultural communication tactics, intercultural identity formation, co-cultural theory, relational-cultural theory, and critical thematic analysis. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

> 1) What are the communication and relational strategies employed by international students during their transitional journey into and out of U.S. universities?
>
> 2) How can relational-cultural and co-cultural theories be used to provide a framework for understanding the relationship-building communicative practices of international students in transitional settings?

2. Literature review

The two main areas of this study; international student transition and intercultural (and more specifically co-cultural) communication have been explored in-depth separately by a wide variety of researchers (e.g., Dodd, 1998; Ellingsworth, 1977; Gudykunst, 2003; Kim, 2005, 2008; Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013; Owen, 1984). Therefore, a simple overview of the relevant theories and important empirical work supporting these theories will only be briefly discussed. More importantly, however, the purpose of this study is to weave together the concepts behind intercultural transition and communication to explicate the transitional communication strategies employed by co-cultural group members as they attempt to navigate

the host culture. Specifically, this will be done by employing Orbe's (1998) co-cultural theory to understand the communication practices employed by international students and Relational-Cultural theory (Jordan, 2010) to understand the relational tactics employed during transition and relationship building in a co-cultural setting.

First, it is necessary to address some of the terminology employed in this study and similar studies. Terms such as "assimilation" come with some cultural baggage. Ting-Toomey (2005), for example, argues that assimilation is a core component of developing a cultural identity, and relates to how easily an individual can accept and become involved in a host culture. Earlier writers point to the fact that there are no set definition of adjustment, acculturation and assimilation related to international students' transition into a host culture—rather the terms are often used interchangeably to "denote behavior, value, and attitude changes associated with feelings of mental health and social integration" (Kagan & Cohen, 1990, p. 133). Assimilation, which Berry (2005) distinguishes from acculturation, often has a more negative connotation. Examples of "forced assimilation" (e.g., Syed, 2013) give weight to this negative connotation, but for the purposes of this study, we will employ the more interchangeable definitions put forth by Kagan and Cohen (1990), along with the understanding from Berry (2005) that assimilation can be a phase of transition experienced during the acculturation process, but it not a wholesale rejection of a home culture for that of the host culture.

2.1. International student transitions and acculturative stress

Researchers have documented that international students face myriad potential stressors as they transition into the United States and move through their academic experiences (Arthur, 2001; Lértora & Croffie, 2020; Lértora et al., 2017; Lértora & Sullivan, 2019; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Among these challenges, acculturative stress is often identified as a leading cause of transition issues among international students (Cao et al., 2016; Fritz et al., 2008; Pan et al., 2007; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Ying, 2005). Poyrazli et al. (2004) define acculturative stress as "a marked deterioration of the general health status of an individual; it encompasses physiological, psychological, and social aspects that are explicitly linked to the acculturation process" (Poyrazli et al., 2004, p. 74). In addition to the negative psychological outcomes associated with acculturative stress, negative social outcomes may directly affect how international students relate to individuals in the U.S. and develop beneficial relationships (Lértora & Croffie, 2020).

2.2. Intercultural communication and identity

Intercultural communication, which arose in western academic inquiry in the late 1950s and early 1960s came in an era when the U.S. was actively striving to mirror McLuhan's (1962) concept of the "global village" and was seeking to increase understanding of non-Western communication practices and cultures (Kim, 2005).

This trend in understanding the complexities that arise when individuals from two or more cultures meet and need to communicate has given rise to numerous theories and models through which scholars can conceptualize the complexities of these micro-level interactions (e.g., Gudykunst, 2003). To add additional complexities to the notion of intercultural communication, however, over the years, the definition of culture has expanded from encompassing only large groups of people loosely bounded by nation-states or ethnic or religious identities to becoming more inclusive of smaller subgroups that include individuals who identify along lines of gender, ability, sexual orientation, or other identification markers (Kim, 2005). This allows for a more inclusive examination of "intercultural" communication and invites a closer look at what it means to identify a person communicating in an intercultural environment (Kim, 2005).

According to Kim (2008, p. 359), "prolonged and cumulative intercultural communication experiences" can cause individuals to experience a process of gradual evolution in their identities. This identity development or evolution process integrates and directly affects the acculturation, adaptation, and transformation processes that occur when individuals immerse themselves in another culture for an extended period. Historically, scholars have examined this process from a singular standpoint of adaption, assuming that individuals entering a new society would employ every possible means to adapt to the new cultural norms of their host society and largely discard their previous cultural identities (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). However, more recent scholars have acknowledged that a more complex phenomenon occurs, which results in a more two-way adaptation process, where the host culture also adapts, and newcomers employ a more sophisticated array of tools in their interactions with the host culture (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). From this more complicated understanding of intercultural communication and identity development, we can now turn to more concrete tools that may be employed by individuals who suddenly find themselves co-cultural members in U.S. society.

2.3. Co-cultural theory

Co-cultural theory, developed by Mark Orbe (1998), attempts to shed light on the communication strategies employed by non-dominant cultural group members in everyday interactions, which necessarily include navigation through oppressive societal structures (Castle Bell et al., 2015). In his landmark book, Orbe (1998) calls for the use of the term *co-culture* to describe non-dominant groups while avoiding "negative or inferior connotations of past descriptions (e.g., *sub*culture, *minor*ity) while also acknowledging the great diversity of influential cultures that simultaneously exist" (p. 1, original emphasis). Thus, for the purpose of this study, we use Orbe's terminology to include international students in institutions of higher education in the United States (Urban & Orbe, 2007).

Within co-cultural theory, Orbe (1998) identifies 26 co-cultural practices to help explicate *what* communication practices co-cultural group members employ: (a) avoiding, (b) averting controversy, (c) maintaining interpersonal barriers, (d) emphasizing commonalities, (e) exemplifying strengths, (f) mirroring, (g) dissociating, (h) dispelling stereotypes, (i) manipulating stereotypes, (j) embracing stereotypes, (k) developing positive face, (l) censoring self, (m) extensive preparation, (n)

overcompensating, (o) communicating self, (p) educating others, (q) intragroup networking, (r) strategic distancing, (s) ridiculing self, (t) using liaisons, (u) increasing visibility, (v) confronting, (w) gaining advantage, (x) bargaining, (y) attacking, and (z) sabotaging others.

To dive deeper into the issue and explain *how* and *why* co-cultural group members may employ these tactics, Orbe explains six universal factors that help explicate the processes through which co-cultural group members select communication tactics. These factors are (a) preferred outcome, (b) field of experience, (c) abilities, (d) situational context, (e) perceived costs and rewards, and (f) communication approach.

Once these core practices and factors are understood, we can now move into how researchers have used co-cultural theory to understand international students' experiences. Urban and Orbe (2007) first explored this notion of international students as co-cultural group members in their study examining the communicative practices of international students as they navigated the U.S. cultural systems and what effects this navigation had on their self-identity. Since then, numerous scholars have continued to explore the experiences of international students negotiating the dominant cultural systems. For example, Cho and Lee (2016) employed Urban and Orbe's (2007) findings to explore the communication tactics used by international students to seek necessary information proactively. Baker (2017) explored international students' third culture building processes through a co-cultural communication lens, to understand how students in a host culture navigate building interpersonal relationships. Most recently, Adegbola et al. (2018) explored African students' identity negotiations and how they managed relational conflicts. The themes discovered by Adegbola et al. (2018) suggest that communication strategies employed by international students from African countries may be affected by uncertainty in self-presentation, which the authors found to be associated with limited ability and/or willingness to develop deeper relationships with domestic students. This difficulty in building meaningful relationships with others has been linked to transition difficulties and mental health breakdowns, which will be explored in subsequent sections.

2.4. Relational-cultural theory

Relational-cultural theory (RCT) was originally conceived as a theoretical orientation in mental health counseling that arose in the 1970s as a feminist response to theories that placed white, Eurocentric males in a position of normality (Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020). Specifically, notions of a "normal" development trajectory from dependence to independence were rejected and replaced with a conceptualization that "human beings grow through and toward connection" (Jordan, 2010, p. 1). Originally used to conceptualize women in the mental health counseling setting, RCT has since been expanded to conceptualize a range of other individuals and, most recently, international student transition experiences in U.S. universities (Lértora & Croffie, 2020). The growth-fostering relationship, which is conceptualized as a relationship in which the interaction is mutually beneficial between the individuals engaged in the relationship, is one of the core tenants of RCT (Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020; Miller 1976). Proponents of RCT have consequently identified the "five good things" associated with growth-fostering relationships: (a) a sense of zest; (b) an increase in self-worth; (c) a better understanding

of self, others, and interpersonal relationships; (d) elevated levels of productivity; and (e) desire to engage in more meaningful connections (Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020).

However, RCT theorists also understand that disconnection and conflict in relationships is inevitable, and if this disconnection is handled with empathy and understanding, growth continues (Jordan, 2010). Therefore, disconnection is identified as the second core tenant of RCT (Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020). However, when power imbalances emerge in the disconnection process, feelings of anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions may emerge (Jordan, 2010). From this understanding, RCT scholars developed the opposite of the "five good things," which are: (a) a drop in energy, (b) a decreased sense of self, (c) less clarity and more confusion in relationships, (d) decreased levels of productivity, and (e) withdrawal from all relationships (Jordan, 2008; Jordan, 2010; Lértora & Croffie, 2020).

Finally, RCT theorists propose that the relational connections and disconnections described above mold how individuals receive information, thus formulating relational images. This concept, the third core tenant of RCT, is described as the "inner constructions and expectations we each create out of our experiences in relationships" (Miller & Stiver, 1997, as quoted in Jordan, 2010, p. 26). When these relational images are flexible and change as individuals grow and develop, they can be modified to accommodate new and increasingly complex social relationships. However, when these relational images become rigid, they may prevent individuals from fully entering mutually beneficial or growth-fostering relationships (Jordan, 2010).

2.5. International students as co-cultural group members seeking to develop growth-fostering relationships

In the current study, international students are conceptualized as individuals who have willingly entered U.S. society to pursue education at the tertiary level, and who, in the course of their studies and interactions with both individuals from the U.S. and individuals from other countries, must necessarily participate in intercultural communication. This study seeks to explore the specific communication tactics employed by international students as they transition in, through, and out of U.S. institutions, while simultaneously trying to create relationships (plutonic, academic, professional, romantic, etc.) that are mutually beneficial. Previous studies have established that international students employ co-cultural communication mechanisms (Urban & Orbe, 2007) and that their transitionary experiences can be conceptualized through the lens of RCT (Lértora & Croffie, 2020). Adegbola et al. (2018) began to hint at the relational aspects of the co-cultural communication process in their recent work, and this study sought to solidify the understanding of international students' transition experiences through a communication lens as they navigate their new positionality of co-cultural identity in U.S. universities.

3. Method

This study used nine interview transcripts from a previous study, in which international students at universities in the United States were asked about their transition experiences in a semi-structured

interview format. These studies provide some of the theoretical frameworks for the current re-examination of interview data (Lértora & Croffie, 2020; Lértora et al., 2017; Lértora, & Sullivan, 2019). The interviews were previously collected under Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at the relevant sponsoring institution and were de-identified and transcribed before analysis for the current project began.

Lawless and Chen's (2018) method of critical thematic analysis was employed to critically examine the interviewees' discourse. Lawless and Chen (2018) extend Owen's (1984) version of thematic analysis (which searches for recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness) by adding an additional layer of focus through the identification of ideologies, power relations, and status-based hierarchies. Because the interviews from the previous studies were all collected from a phenomenological perspective (Moustakas, 1994), which allowed the participants to explain their experiences in their own words, it is assumed that these interviews will display the individual's thoughts and experiences in the original form as much as possible.

In the original studies, transcripts from each interview were transcribed verbatim and included notations of non-verbal communication (e.g., slumped shoulders, teary eyes, hesitations, etc.). Thus, Lawless and Chen's (2018) critical thematic analysis fits the overarching goal of this study, which aims to uncover the co-cultural communication tactics employed by international students as they navigate transitional issues in U.S. universities. Specifically, the methods outlined by Lawless and Chen (2018, p. 6) include analyses of "social systems, dominant ideologies, and power relations" that are relevant for understanding the positionality of international students within a larger sociocultural setting. These ideals also align with the concepts of process, concept, emotion, and value coding (Miles et al., 2020). In critical thematic analysis, Lawless and Chen (2018) identified two types of coding: open coding and closed coding. In the open coding process, researchers should be guided by occurrences of repetition, recurrence, and/or forcefulness to identify patterns of discourse that are "important, salient, or meaningful to our participants wither individually or collectively" (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p. 7). Once the open coding process has been conducted, Lawless and Chen (2018, p. 7) call for closed coding, which aims to "interlink the interview discourses with larger societal ideologies".

Because the current analysis is attempting to understand the transition communication techniques employed by international students through two existing frameworks, an adapted critical thematic analysis will be employed, where during the closed coding process, the interviewees' discourse will be examined through the dual lenses of RCT and co-cultural communication theories, resulting in a layer of provisional, *a priori* coding (Miles et al., 2020) over the open coding. However, in accordance with Lawless and Chen's (2018) methodology, this portion of the analysis will carefully explore what is *not* clearly stated and included as what *is*. Therefore, this line of thinking falls in line with both Orbe's (1998) call to explore the other side (e.g. the dominant side) of the co-cultural communication process, as well as Jordan's (2010, p. 88) call to apply RCT outside of clinical settings in order to "delineate the effects of stratification and marginalization on the individual and on social groups" and better understand a non-dominant (i.e. white, heterosexual, male) way of identifying and interacting with the world.

3.1. Positionality and power dynamics in the data

The data sources used for this study come from previously collected interviews with international students from studies exploring the transitional experiences of international students. In a study by Urban and Orbe (2007), they noted a limitation of their data as that it was extant, and so they were not specifically collected for the purposes of answering their research question. This study echoes that limitation because questions related to international students' communicative strategies were not specifically addressed, so the specific details of communicating relationship-building in a foreign land were not explicitly asked. However, this weakness also lends itself to a potential strength of this dataset in that any examples of co-cultural communication tactics mentioned or displayed by the interviewees emerged organically and were not specifically asked for by the interviewer. One additional limitation is that the interviews were conducted by three researchers for four different, although similar, studies. Because a critical framework is utilized in this analysis, the positionality of the researchers who originally collected the data should be noted—all were male and two were white presenting, although of those two, one identified as gay and the other as a first-generation American of Latino origin. The third interviewer was African American. Additionally, the white male Latino was a faculty member, while the other two interviewers were graduate students, altering the power dynamics present during the interviews. While it may not be clearly evident in the analysis of the data that researcher positionality had a direct effect, it does need to be noted and positioned as a possible limitation to the generalizability of the study.

3.2. Data analysis

The initial round of coding involved identifying specific co-cultural communication strategies, using deductive coding from the 26 listed communicative strategies offered by Orbe (1998). Then, a second round of deductive coding was conducted, looking for four tenets of RCT previously identified by Lértora and Croffie (2020) as present in the ways international students discussed their perceptions of transitioning through higher education in the United States. Concurrently with the deductive coding of the previously identified RCT themes, inductive coding was conducted to identify other possible salient themes related to how international students communicated their transition and relationship-building processes. This combination of deductive and inductive coding was appropriate, based on the methodological goals of testing a theoretical application in a new setting (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Once all the data were analyzed using both the pre-identified codes of co-cultural theory and RCT and inductively coded to allow other salient themes to emerge, the researcher reviewed the passages coded through the indictive process to collapse conceptualizations into more salient, overarching themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify patterns of convergence between the co-cultural communication strategies and the relational components of RCT to identify whether certain co-cultural communication strategies could be consistently identified as relational in nature, thus leading to an expanded understanding of the communication strategies employed by international students.

4. Results

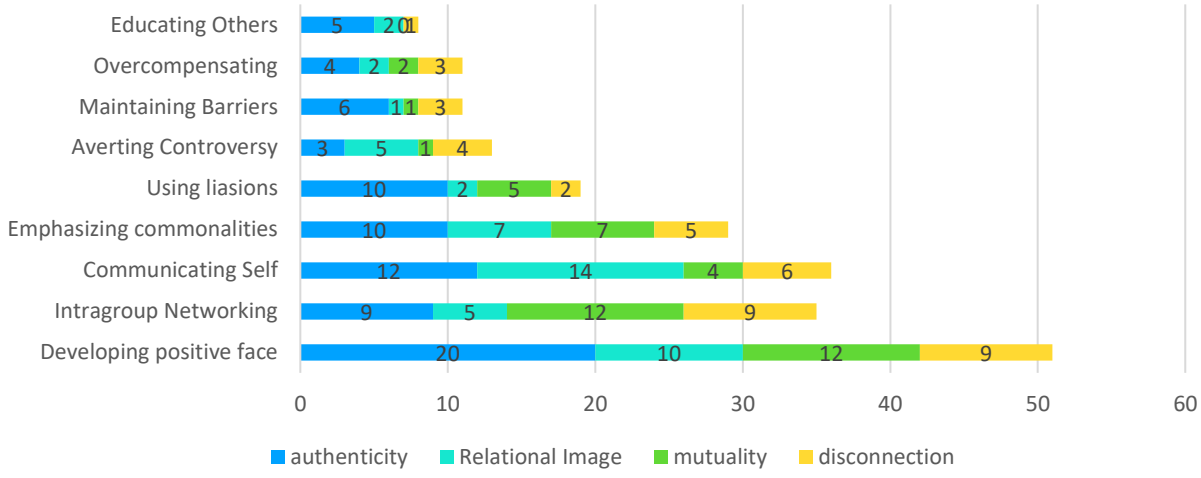
After two rounds of closed coding looking for co-cultural communication strategies and RCT tenets, it was discovered that certain co-cultural communication strategies were displayed more commonly than others in the sample interviews, and patterns began to emerge where RCT tenets overlapped with certain co-cultural communication strategies. Table 1 displays the nine co-cultural communication strategies displayed by five or more study participants, along with the top three RCT components that co-occurred with the specific co-cultural communication strategy.

Table 1. Co-cultural communication strategies per case with top three RCT associated concepts

Co-cultural communication strategy	# of cases exhibiting strategy	Top three related RCT components
Using liaisons	9	Authenticity, mutuality, relational images
Developing positive face	8	Authenticity, mutuality, relational images
Communicating self	7	Relational images, authenticity, disconnection
Overcompensating	6	Authenticity, disconnection, relational images
Educating others	6	Authenticity, relational images, disconnection
Maintaining barriers	6	Authenticity, disconnection, relational images
Emphasizing commonalities	5	Authenticity, relational images, mutuality
Averting controversy	5	Relational Images, disconnection, authenticity
Intragroup networking	5	Mutuality, authenticity, disconnection

From this point, the identified RCT conceptualizations (authenticity, mutuality, relational images, and disconnection) were cross analyzed with the co-cultural communication tactics to determine whether there was an identifiable correlation between the top nine identified co-cultural communication tactics and the top six identified RCT conceptualizations. Figure 1 shows how RCT conceptualizations are related to co-cultural communication strategies. Specific examples that draw attention to the potential tensions international students experience as new and temporary co-cultural members of the United States are discussed in detail below.

Figure 1. Relationship of co-cultural strategies and RCT concepts



4.1. Authenticity in engagement ←→ Developing positive face

The concept of *authenticity* is a central aspect of engaging in relational dynamics and is defined by Jordan (2010, p. 101) as a "capacity to bring one's real experience, feelings, and thoughts into relationship, with sensitivity and awareness to the possible impact on others of one's actions". In our analysis, the concept of authenticity was most commonly co-coded with the co-cultural communication strategy of *developing positive face*, defined by Orbe (1998, p. 16) as instances when co-cultural group members assume "a gracious communicator stance in which one is more considerate, polite, and attentive to dominant group members". The combination of *authenticity* and *developing positive face* occurred in 20 instances, across six of the nine transcripts.

This juxtaposition suggests a tension international students may experience as they navigate their new status as a co-cultural group member, often knowing that it is a temporary situation. They may hold a natural desire to authentically engage with members of the dominant (host) culture, yet also feel pressure to adopt a positive face, especially since they likely had to work hard to obtain the privilege to study in the United States. This tension is highlighted by an exchange student from Germany as she described settling into her new routine at a U.S. university, "You will getting used to how people talk and how people are… you will get used to it and it won't be that hard anymore. Yeah, you just have to be patient and tell to yourself often that everything will get better." Another participant displayed a tentative approach to authenticity in expressing concern over immigration policies that may affect their status, yet followed up their potential criticism of their host country's president with an empathetic statement in an attempt to maintain a positive, deferential face (possibly in light of an uncertainty where the interviewer's political liaisons might be):

> Yeah, I mean we just passed through a very um not too good election …the atmosphere here was very tough um especially having a president who seems to be anti-immigrant…anti-everything

> possible so but …I felt so bad that the president has such a stance would be elected by the people, but at the same time there is nothing I can do.

Other participants echoed this tension between wanting to be authentic in their engagements and feeling the need to maintain a positive face with members of their host culture, suggesting a need for further exploration of the positionality of international students in their host culture and how it affects their identities.

4.2. Disconnection ←→ Intragroup networking

Disconnection, an important aspect of healthy relationships, is defined as "interactions where mutual empathy and mutual empowerment do not occur" (Jordan, 2010, p. 103), and may involve a sense of disappointment or feeling misunderstood. Interestingly, while the co-occurrence of *disconnection* and *intragroup networking*, which is defined as "identifying and working with other co-cultural group members who share common philosophies, convictions, and goals" (Orbe, 1998, p.16), only occurred in two of the nine transcripts, it was a reoccurring theme in those two transcripts, with nine separate instances where *disconnection* and *intragroup networking* co-occurred, so it was deemed noteworthy to include in this discussion. For example, as a Chinese undergraduate student who was about to graduate reflected on what he might have done differently in his academic career, he responded, "just hang out with Americans….'cause all people from, like, different countries, they all just stick with their own people, like own country. Um, so they don't really have friendships with others." Here, he notes a well-documented occurrence among international students, where they tend to form relationships with others from their own or similar cultures, but displays a sense of regret that he was not able to connect better with his American peers, despite having attended the university for the past two years. These feelings of disconnection were echoed by another student, who in a different tactic, placed the responsibility of disconnection on American students, rather than on international students only wanting to hang out with people of their own cultures:

> ...but one thing I also notice is students here don't seem to care much about other people…in my school when we have an international classmate people might talk to him and ask something about his country…but here I don't think they're curious about those things and no one asked me those questions.

The participant expressed a desire to make American friends but felt that the desire was one-sided, so she eventually ended up hanging out with other international students because they seemed more willing to make new friends.

4.3. Relational images ←→ Communicating self

Much of the interview topics were related to how the participants saw and described their experiences in a U.S. university, so *communicating self* was a theme well represented in the interviews. The term, as

described by Orbe (1998, p. 17) states co-cultural members engaging in this practice interact "with dominant group members in an authentic, open, and genuine manner" and that this strategy is often "used by those with strong self-concepts". In this dyad, the tension falls between an external (communicating self) concept and an internal one: *relational images*. This term refers to the "inner pictures of what has happened to us in relationships" accompanied by a "set of beliefs about why relationships are the way they are" (Jordan, 2010, p. 107). Therefore, international students must balance their desire to communicate their self authentically with a new positionality of being a co-cultural member, which can serve to rupture their relational images, as exemplified by this international student's narrative:

> When I first came here, like I was totally okay with like the random jokes people would make about my culture, my name, any of that…but the older I …the more I realized it's totally okay to be brown and be happy with that, the more I've been accepting of myself. And, and the more I am likely to call you out if you were to say something that was not okay. … Like, I'm now like confident enough to correct them and say hey you should never laugh at a person's name because that's actually very offensive.

Through this example we can see how the international student had to reclaim her identity as a brown person through learning to communicate herself authentically and being willing to reexamine her relational images in a new context where her skin color identified her as part of the co-cultural group.

5. Discussion and implications

There are several implications that can be drawn from this exploratory analysis of how international students communicate their relationship building in a co-cultural setting. First, through this exploratory analysis of co-cultural communications strategies and relational cultural conceptualizations, it is apparent that RCT and co-cultural communication theory can work hand in hand to give a more nuanced understanding of the communication strategies used by international students. This more nuanced understanding of the tensions faced by international students as they attempt to build relationships and navigate a new cultural status can offer scholars from several fields (e.g. communication, student development, clinical mental health counseling, higher education policy, etc.) a framework to better understand the ways international students express and perceive their relationship-building activities. The tensions revealed in the patterns of co-occurrence between RCT and co-cultural communication strategies also suggest that further exploration of international students' communication strategies is warranted.

These findings support the work done by previous scholars in the area of co-cultural communication (e.g., Urban & Orbe, 2007) and international student support (e.g., Lértora & Croffie, 2019), and extends the understandings of the two approaches through an intersectional exploration between RCT and co-cultural communication theory. Suggestions for future research include re-analyzing a larger set of data with a more developed codebook of salient RCT and co-cultural themes and interviewing another round of participants with the current research questions in mind in order to obtain data specifically trying to examine the relational nature of co-cultural communication strategies employed by international students.

This study has the potential to provide a new theoretical perspective for examining intercultural communication processes from the perspective of approaching issues from a non-dominant perspective and does not normalize individuality, whiteness, maleness, or other dominant perspectives, but rather allows for a relational perspective that may be much better suited to exploring communication between individuals from drastically (or even marginally) different cultures.

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A Movement towards Language Learning by Artificial Intelligence: A PLS-SEM Approach to Instrument Development and Validation

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Abstract

This study aimed to design and validate a comprehensive questionnaire to assess the impact of AI on language learning, focusing on key factors such as personalization, adaptive feedback, AI dependence, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, teacher enthusiasm, and language comprehension. A 27-item survey was initially developed based on the Technology Acceptance Model and elements of smart learning environments. Through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the instrument was refined to 17 items across seven components. The study surveyed 150 Iraqi students, revealing that personalization, adaptive feedback, and teacher enthusiasm significantly enhance AI-assisted language learning outcomes. Additionally, gamified features and bias-free access to AI technologies were found to improve engagement and equity. Structural equation modeling confirmed the reliability and validity of the proposed model, emphasizing AI's effectiveness in addressing linguistic and idiomatic challenges.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, language learning, technology acceptance model

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1. Introduction

The advent of technology has significantly reshaped the landscape of language learning, especially by enabling enhanced interactions among learners beyond traditional classroom environments. As educational paradigms continue to evolve towards more integrated and flexible frameworks, the role of technology has become indispensable in fostering collaboration and interaction outside the confines of conventional classrooms. The introduction of ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs) approximately 18 months ago has opened up new and unprecedented opportunities. Nevertheless, an essential question arises: does technology primarily serve as a facilitator for language acquisition, or is language learning a medium for users to interact with technology? Studies reveal that learners who utilize AI-assisted technologies demonstrate better language proficiency and greater autonomy in their studies compared to those relying solely on traditional methods (Dhanapal, 2024).

While the integration of AI into education offers numerous advantages, it also presents significant challenges, particularly in the context of language acquisition. Despite the potential of AI technologies, there remains a considerable gap in understanding their broader implications for both students and educators. Concerns persist about the validity, reliability, and overall efficacy of these systems in supporting language learning. This research aims to address these gaps by developing and validating a comprehensive questionnaire to evaluate the impact of AI on language learning, with a particular focus on English learners. The study examines the influence of AI on various facets of language instruction, such as personalization, learner engagement, comprehension, feedback mechanisms, and the broader implications of AI integration within educational environments.

The integration of AI in language learning has garnered significant attention as researchers and educators explore its potential to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of language acquisition. AI-powered tools, including chatbots and adaptive learning systems, are increasingly employed to create personalized educational experiences tailored to individual learner needs, revolutionizing traditional teaching methods (Capinding, 2024). This shift is especially critical in second language acquisition, where AI can deliver customized support that accommodates diverse linguistic backgrounds and learning preferences (Sihite et al., 2023). Furthermore, developing robust evaluation tools for AI-based language learning systems is vital to ensuring their reliability and validity. Research indicates that AI can significantly improve knowledge acquisition and critical thinking when supported by well-designed rubrics and evaluation frameworks (Hmoud et al., 2024). Validating these tools is essential to assess their effectiveness in evaluating learning outcomes and guiding instructional strategies (Hmoud et al., 2024). As AI continues to advance, its role in language education is expected to expand, offering innovative solutions that enhance both teaching and learning (Adıgüzel et al., 2023).

However, the ethical considerations associated with AI in education cannot be overlooked. The increasing adoption of AI necessitates addressing concerns related to data privacy, bias, and the risks of over-reliance on automated systems (Klímová et al., 2023). To preserve the quality of language education, it is imperative that AI complements rather than replaces human instruction (Liulka et al., 2024). While AI

has significant potential to enhance language acquisition, its implementation requires careful consideration of its impact on pedagogy, assessment, and ethics. Ongoing research and validation efforts are crucial to establishing AI as a reliable and legitimate resource for language learners, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

To better understand the impact of AI on language learning, this study developed a questionnaire that covers various aspects such as bias, personalization, accessibility, technological dependency, feedback mechanisms, language comprehension, and gamification-driven engagement.

According to Laksanasut (2025), gamification has emerged as a transformative method in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, utilizing game principles to improve engagement, motivation, and retention. Ntoutsi et al. (2020) assert that AI-driven decision-making might exacerbate current biases and provide novel categories and criteria, hence creating significant potential for new forms of bias. According to Yenuri (2023) as AI advances, it possesses the capacity to transform language teaching by providing tailored learning routes that can accommodate a variety of learners globally. The research conducted by Waly and Zakiyyah (2024) reveals a substantial dependence on AI tools among participants, with most relying on these tools for writing tasks and expressing uncertainty regarding their writing capabilities in their absence. A study conducted by Yesilyurt (2023) investigated AI feedback methods, including automated writing evaluation, intelligent tutoring systems, conversational agents, affective computing, and learning analytics dashboards. Advantages were outlined in conjunction with challenges pertaining to ethics, excessive dependence on technology, and transparency. The results demonstrated a responsible, human-centered integration of AI to improve teaching and the learner experience.

Future researchers may use the results of this questionnaire validation study to examine the relationship between all the above elements and find possible obstacles and areas for development. Developing and validating a questionnaire on AI's impact on language acquisition, especially for students, would enhance research methods. This study intends to provide a basis for future research in this dynamic topic by establishing the questionnaire's reliability and validity via rigorous methods. The main goal is to develop and test a poll assessing AI's influence on students' language learning. This project aims to provide a standardized instrument that provides insights into AI's function in language acquisition.

Understanding this influence is essential for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders seeking to effectively implement AI technologies (Ma & Siau, 2018). A validated questionnaire will serve as a reliable instrument to evaluate these impacts across diverse educational contexts, enabling meaningful comparisons and evidence-based decision-making.

2. Research framework and hypotheses

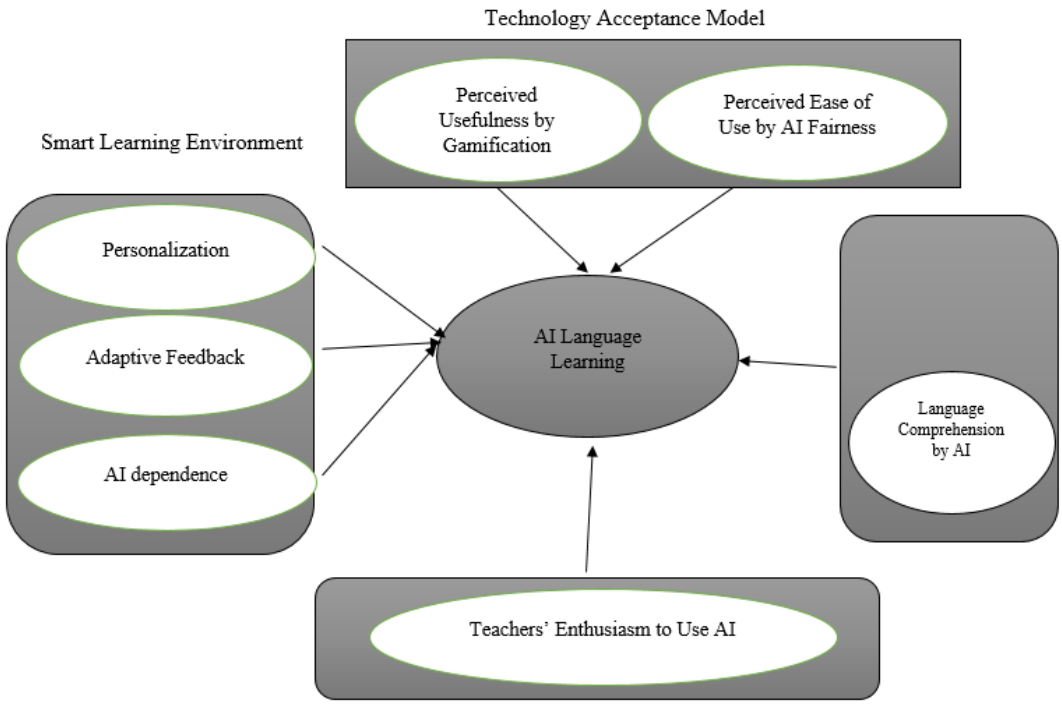
2.1. Conceptual research framework

This study aims to fill a critical gap in the literature by developing and conceptualizing domain-specific components of generative AI. The researchers employ the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), established by the renowned information management scholar Davis (1986; 1989), as a theoretical foundation to evaluate EFL learners' acceptance of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT. Over the past three decades, TAM has been widely recognized across fields such as information management, digital sociology, educational technology, and computer assisted language learning (CALL), for its ability to explain the acceptance, rejection, and use of information technologies (Bailey et al., 2022; Davis, 1986). Drawing from the literature, this research identifies key factors influencing students' language learning experiences when utilizing generative AI tools. These factors include perceived usefulness (Xu & Du, 2018), perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989), personalization (Pataranutaporn et al., 2021), adaptive feedback (Guo et al., 2020), AI dependence (Capinding, 2024), and teachers' enthusiasm for adopting AI (Yao & Wang, 2024), language comprehension (Sihite et al., 2023). Understanding the impact of these elements is critical for optimizing the design and application of generative AI technologies in language learning contexts. By focusing on these dimensions, the study seeks to provide meaningful insights to enhance student engagement and interaction with generative AI, resulting in more effective and enriching educational experiences.

Numerous studies have highlighted personalization and immediate feedback in smart learning environments as critical strategies for improving learning outcomes (Pardo et al., 2019). Additionally, research underscores the significance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in influencing language learning success (Liu & Ma, 2024).

This study's research framework is shown in Figure 1. Using the Smart Learning Environment, Technology Acceptance Model, and students' assessments of instructors' AI perspectives, this research explores AI-driven language learning situations. The work builds on previous research to identify and verify key aspects, assisting instructors and students in furthering AI-assisted language instruction (Karataş et al., 2024). Hypotheses linked to these variables will be assessed using the model in this study.

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework



2.2. Proposed hypotheses for this study

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Personalization positively affects language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Adaptive feedback positively affects language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): AI dependency positively impacts language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): AI language comprehension positively influences language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Perceived usefulness through gamification and engagement with AI positively impacts language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Bias and fairness in AI positively influence language learning with AI.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Teachers' enthusiasm for using AI positively impacts language learning with AI.

3. Method

3.1. Ethical considerations

After constructing the preliminary scale, official data gathering began. The survey used random sampling to guarantee participant identity and confidentiality. The survey was conducted with informed permission from participants and ethical clearance from an official notice. The researchers included a 150-word opening section to the questionnaire to clarify the study's goal. Participants were informed that their data would be safely saved in encrypted online files and that personal details such names, universities, and phone numbers were not necessary. Special attention was given to maintaining ethical standards and participant privacy throughout the research.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The study followed Churchill's (1979) foundational scale development methodology, which involves constructing the initial scale, collecting formal data, conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The first step of scale development included developing an AI language learning framework, structuring the item pool, and purifying goods. A thorough literature assessment guided the creation and organization of the item pool. Following expert reviews, researchers revised preliminary questions to create a set of 27 items for initial data collection.

Table 1. Initial survey development

Category		Question
Bias and Fairness in AI	1.1	Do you think that AI-based language learning tools help people from all countries and cultures the same?
	1.2	Do AI-based language learning tools fairly recognize and respond to a variety of regional accents without bias?
Human vs. AI: Support, Personalization, Accessibility	2.1	How important do you consider teacher-student interaction in language learning classrooms compared to AI-based tools?
	2.2	Do you believe human teachers provide better emotional support than AI-based language learning tools?
	2.3	Do you think human instructors offer more personalized feedback as compared to AI-based language learning tools?
	2.4	Do you feel that teacher-student interaction is more effective at building a learner's confidence in speaking a new language than AI tools?
	2.5	Do you believe AI-based language tools are more affordable than traditional in-person language classes?
	2.6	Do you think the technological requirements (e.g., internet access, devices) for AI-based language learning tools are a barrier for some students?
AI Dependence and Impact	3.1	How reliant do you think students become on AI-based language learning tools as compared to traditional learning methods?
	3.2	Do you think over-reliance on AI-based language learning tools could reduce students' ability to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills?

	3.3	Do you believe that depending too much on AI-based language learning tools could lead to the loss of traditional learning methods, such as memorization and handwriting?
AI Personalization Adaptation	5.1	To what extent do you believe AI-based language learning tools adapt to the unique needs of individual learners, especially those with learning disabilities?
	5.2	Do you think AI-based language learning tools can effectively adapt to different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)?
	5.3	Do AI-based language learning tools customize learning activities based on an individual's progress over time? Do AI-based language learning tools customize learning activities based on an individual's progress over time?
AI Language Comprehension	6.1	Do AI-based language learning tools effectively understand language in different conversational contexts (e.g., formal vs. informal)?
	6.2	Do you feel AI-based language learning tools handle complex language structures (idioms, slang, etc.) effectively in language learning?
	6.5	Do AI-based language learning tools effectively translate or explain idiomatic expressions from one language to another?
Adaptive AI Feedback	6.3	Do AI-based language learning tools adjust the difficulty level of exercises based on a learner's ongoing performance?
	6.4	How effectively do AI-based language learning tools provide immediate corrective feedback when a learner makes a mistake during language exercises?
Teachers' willingness and comfort with AI	7.1	How willing do you think teachers are to adopt AI-based language learning tools in your language classes?
	7.2	Do you think teachers view AI-based language learning tools as a threat to traditional teaching methods?
	7.3	How comfortable do you believe teachers feel using AI-based language learning tools in their classrooms for language instruction?
Customized learning by AI	8.1	8.1. How satisfied are you with the level of personalization AI-based language learning tools provide in tailoring lessons to your individual needs?
	8.2	8.2. Do AI-based language tools adapt to your specific language learning goals (e.g., conversational fluency, grammar, vocabulary)?
Gamification and Engagement of AI	9.1	How motivating do you find the gamified elements (games, rewards, interactive activities) in AI-based language learning tools?
	9.2	How effective are AI-based language learning tools' gamified elements in improving your retention of all language skills and knowledge?
	9.3	How engaging do you find the interactive activities (e.g., simulations, role-playing) provided by AI-based language learning tools in enhancing your language learning experience?

Using Google Forms, the questionnaire was disseminated by instructors at Almamon University College in Baghdad, Iraq. It was shared with students either during class or through course lecture slides to encourage participation. Students were invited to voluntarily take part in the survey, with their decision left entirely to their discretion. To incentivize participation, instructors offered two extra credit points as a reward. The online questionnaire remained accessible from January 1, 2025. Based on the guidelines provided in the literature (Hair et al., 1998), a sample size should be at least five times the number of items in the questionnaire to validate it and conduct exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. With 27 items in the survey, this study targeted a sample size of 135 (27 × 5). Ultimately, 150 participants were

included, meeting the criteria for conducting EFA and CFA. Consequently, data collection was concluded on November 1, 2024. Table 2 provides an overview of the sample's key characteristics.

Table 2. Demographics and characteristics of participants (n=150)

		Frequency	**Percent**
Gender	Female	81	54.0
	Male	67	44.7
	Prefer not to say	2	1.3
	0-2	34	22.7
Years of experience with teaching/ learning English language?	2-5	63	42.0
	5-7	38	25.3
	7-9	8	5.3
	+9	7	4.7
	Minimum	**Maximum**	**Mean ± Std. Deviation**
Age level	19	39	25.11 ± 4.5
Major field of study?	Humanities	116	77.3
	Social Sciences	34	22.7

The table presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The majority of respondents were women (54%), followed by men (44.7%), with a very small proportion opting not to disclose their gender. The participants displayed a diverse range of experience with the English language. The largest group reported 2 to 5 years of experience (42%), followed by those with 0 to 2 years (22.7%) and 5 to 7 years (25.3%). A smaller group, representing 5.3%, had more than 7 years of experience. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 39 years, with an average age of approximately 25 years, indicating that the group consisted predominantly of young individuals. Regarding their fields of study, 77.3% were from Humanities, while 22.7% were from Social Sciences.

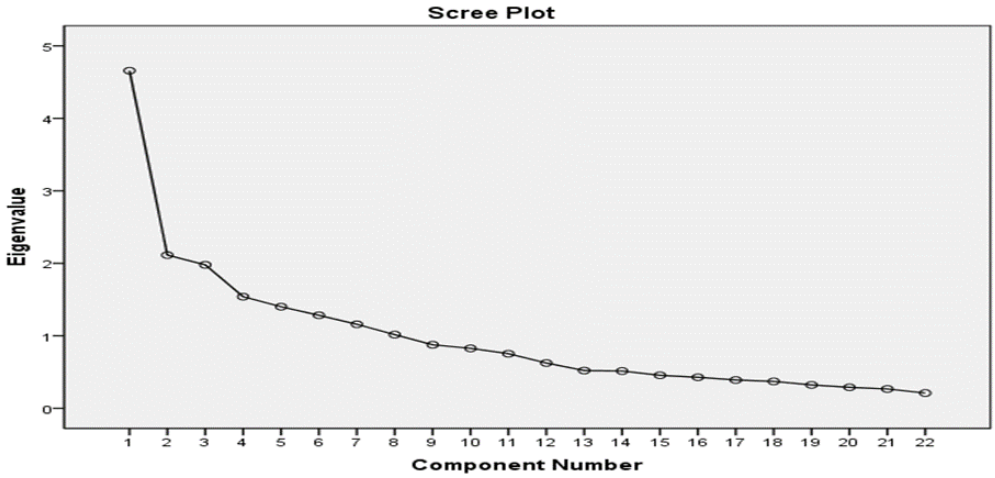
4. Results

4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The researchers conducted both EFA and CFA using SPSS 29 to evaluate the proposed factor structure. EFA was utilized to determine the amount of variance explained by the survey questions. Subsequently, the specific values of the extracted factors were calculated, and the correlation levels of the questions within each construct were assessed. These results, along with Cronbach's alpha, were included to verify reliability. This study aimed to identify the key factors influencing the acceptance of AI-based language learning tools. Through EFA, eight primary factors were identified, ranked by importance as follows: fairness of artificial intelligence, human versus artificial intelligence (support, personalization, and access), AI dependence, language comprehension by artificial intelligence, personalization and adaptability of artificial intelligence, adaptive feedback from artificial intelligence, teachers' enthusiasm for using artificial intelligence, and gamification and usefulness of artificial intelligence. Items 2.1, 2.5,

and 8.1 were excluded from the analysis because their content did not align with the identified factors, as agreed upon by the researchers and statisticians involved in this study.

Figure 2. Scree plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis



4.2. Scree diagram analysis

The scree diagram identified eight components with specific values greater than 1. This scree plot was analyzed to graphically illustrate the number of potentially significant components, thereby reconfirming the selection of these eight components for further analysis (Eisinga et al., 2013).

4.3. Item Analysis

The item analysis conducted on data from the study cohort demonstrated that all items had correlation coefficients with the total score ranging from 0.538 to 0.870, exceeding the threshold of 0.4. This indicates a strong relationship between the items and their respective factors. However, item 8.2 had a correlation coefficient below 0.4 and was therefore excluded from the analysis. Zwick and Velicer (1986) suggest that factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 exhibit stronger predictive ability compared to individual variables. Additionally, the minimum acceptable loading factor value is 0.5. Using the K1 rule, Kaiser rule, and Kaiser-Guttman rule (Goodwyn, 2012), all components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 were retained.

Table 3 presents detailed results, including the amount of variance extracted for each item, factor loadings, eigenvalues, variance accounted for by the eight identified components, KMO index, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 3. Factor loadings of the exploratory factor analysis (n=150)

Factors	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bias and Fairness in AI	1.1	.843							
	1.2	.870							
Human vs. AI: Support, Personalization, Accessibility	2.2		.737						
	2.3		.739						
	2.4		.760						
	2.6		.529						
AI Dependence and Impact	3.1			.570					
	3.2			.769					
	3.3			.791					
AI Language Comprehension	6.1				.705				
	6.2				.795				
	6.5				.643				
AI Personalization Adaptation	5.1					.796			
	5.2					.786			
	5.3					.580			
Adaptive AI Feedback	6.3						.740		
	6.4						.538		
Teachers' Enthusiasm and Comfort with AI	7.1							.672	
	7.2							.651	
	7.3							.805	
Gamification and Engagement of AI	9.2								.834
	9.3								.798
	Eigenv	4.658	2.114	1.979	1.540	1.401	1.283	1.159	1.016
	Varianc	21.17	9.607	8.997	6.998	6.370	5.832	5.268	4.618
	Cumula	21.17	30.77	39.776	46.77	53.14	58.97	64.24	68.86
	KMO	0.694							
	Bartlett	0.000							

4.4. Variance analysis

Table 3 illustrates the amount of variance extracted, which represents the contribution of each factor in explaining the variance of the items. The eight identified factors collectively account for 68.86% of the total variance, demonstrating the model's strong capability to explain the data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were employed to evaluate the model's fit. A KMO value exceeding 0.5, coupled with a significant Bartlett's test result, indicates that the sample is suitable for principal component analysis (Field, 2013). The results revealed a KMO value of **0.694** and a significant Bartlett's test (Sig. = 0.000, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the model fits the data well and that factor analysis is appropriate for this study.

4.5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the findings obtained from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Items with factor loadings below 0.4 or t-statistics less than 1.96 were excluded from the model. Consequently, the component *Human vs. AI: Support, Personalization, Accessibility* was removed from the survey. After refinement, 17 questions were retained in the final model, as specified below.

Figure 3. Standardized seven-factor structural model

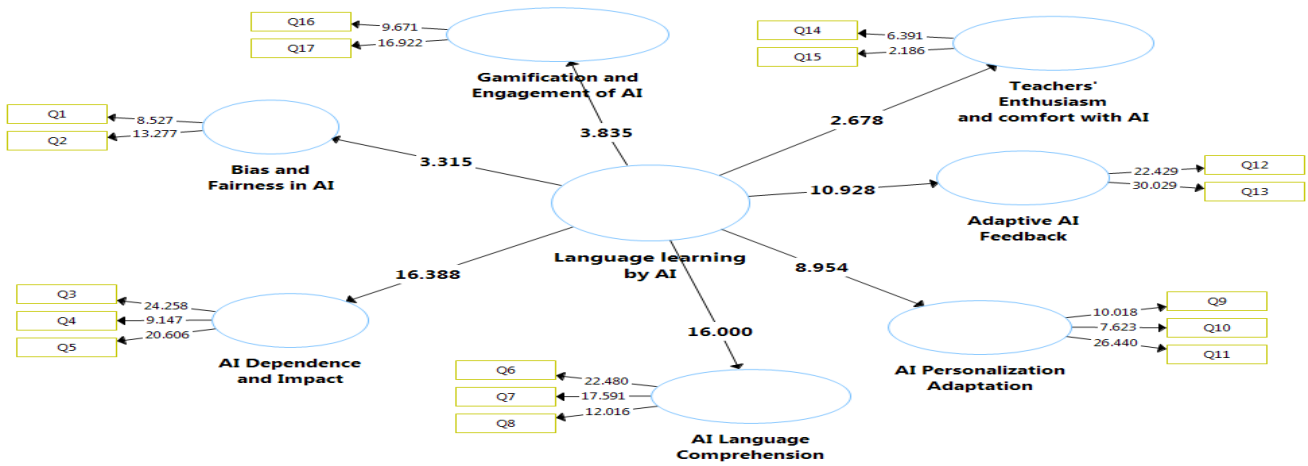
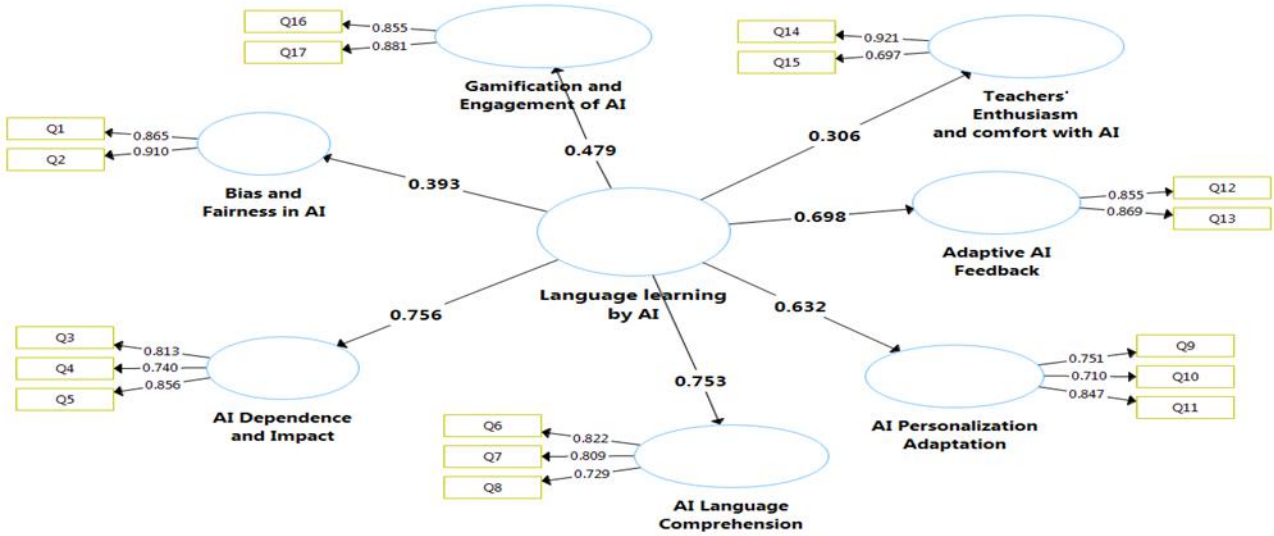


Figure 4. Value seven-factor structural model



4.6. Reliability and validity analysis

The coefficient alpha, commonly referred to as Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978), is widely used to evaluate internal consistency. According to Aryadoust et al. (2016), Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 are indicative of strong consistency, values between 0.50 and 0.70 suggest medium consistency, while values below 0.50 denote insufficient consistency, which could compromise unidimensionality. In this study, the reliability and validity of the survey were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and the average variance extracted (AVE). The results are summarized in Table 4.

The overall instrument achieved a Cronbach's alpha score greater than 0.953, indicating superior reliability compared to the individual constructs, each of which also exceeded the 0.70 threshold. To evaluate convergent validity, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion and the AVE method were applied (Hair et al., 1998). AVE assesses the variance attributed to measurement error relative to the variance captured by a construct. According to Hair et al. (2010), AVE values above 0.5 signify satisfactory convergence. In this study, the scale demonstrated acceptable convergence, with composite reliability (CR) values exceeding 0.7 and AVE values surpassing 0.5.

Table 4. Construct reliability and validity in the confirmatory factor analysis

Factors	Item	Factor loading	T Statistics	P Values	Cronbach's alpha	CR	rho_A	AVE
Bias and Fairness in AI	Q1	0.865	8.527	0.000	0.731	0.881	0.751	0.788
	Q2	0.91	13.277	0.000				
AI Dependence and Impact	Q3	0.813	24.258	0.000				
	Q4	0.74	9.147	0.000	0.733	0.845	0.758	0.647
	Q5	0.856	20.606	0.000				
AI Language Comprehension	Q6	0.822	22.48	0.000				
	Q7	0.809	17.591	0.000	0.692	0.830	0.691	0.620
	Q8	0.729	12.016	0.000				
AI Personalization Adaptation	Q9	0.751	10.018	0.000				
	Q10	0.71	7.623	0.000	0.679	0.814	0.742	0.595
	Q11	0.847	26.44	0.000				
Adaptive AI Feedback	Q12	0.855	22.429	0.000	0.654	0.853	0.655	0.743
	Q13	0.869	30.029	0.000				
Teachers' Enthusiasm and comfort with AI	Q14	0.921	6.391	0.000	0.631	0.797	0.660	0.666
	Q15	0.697	2.186	0.029				
Gamification and Engagement of AI	Q16	0.855	9.671	0.000	0.674	.860	0.678	0.754
	Q17	0.71	16.922	0.000				

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. AI Dependence and Impact	0.804							
2. AI Language Comprehension	0.426	0.788						
3. AI Personalization Adaptation	0.385	0.401	0.772					
4. Adaptive AI Feedback	0.441	0.473	0.267	0.862				
5. Bias and Fairness in AI	0.264	0.144	0.214	0.179	0.888			
6. Gamification and Engagement of AI	0.238	0.266	0.128	0.279	0.095	0.868		
7. Language learning by AI	0.756	0.753	0.632	0.698	0.393	0.479	0.459	
8. Teachers' Enthusiasm and comfort with AI_	0.051	0.227	0.16	0.165	0.064	0.187	0.306	0.816

4.7. Model validation

The findings confirm that the proposed model is appropriate. The finalized 7-component questionnaire, consisting of 17 questions, demonstrates robust reliability and validity.

4.7.1. Structural model assessment

The structural model was developed and analyzed using SmartPLS 3 (Chin, 2010). A bootstrapping sample size of 5000 was utilized to determine the significance of the model's paths. The results of the study, focusing on university students' AI language learning through PLS-SEM, are illustrated in Figure 5.

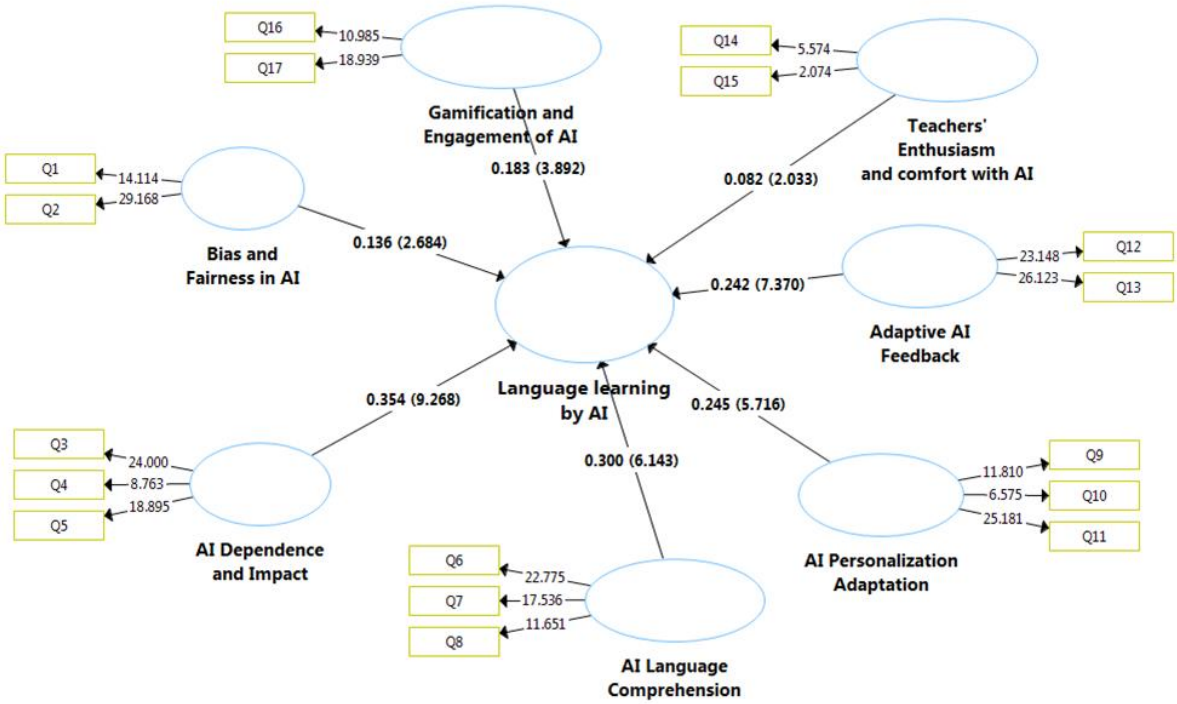
4.7.2. Correlation matrix of research variables

Table 6 presents the correlation matrix of the research variables. The results indicate a significant positive correlation among the variables, reflecting consistent relationships across the model components.

Table 6. Correlation between variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. AI Dependence and Impact	1							
2. AI Language Comprehension	0.425	1						
3. AI Personalization Adaptation	0.384	0.401	1					
4. Adaptive AI Feedback	0.44	0.473	0.267	1				
5. Bias and Fairness in AI	0.264	0.144	0.214	0.179	1			
6. Gamification and Engagement of AI	0.239	0.266	0.128	0.279	0.095	1		
7. Language learning by AI	0.766	0.75	0.632	0.694	0.391	0.475	1	
8. Teachers' Enthusiasm and comfort with AI_	0.051	0.227	0.16	0.166	0.064	0.187	0.291	1

Figure 5. Structural model showing beta coefficient and T-statistic



4.7.3. Hypothesis testing

Table 7. Summary of hypothesis results

Hypothetical Relationships	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T-Statistics	P-Values	Results
H1. AI Personalization → Language learning by AI	0.245	0.043	5.716	0.000	Supported
H2. Adaptive AI Feedback → Language learning by AI	0.242	0.033	7.37	0.000	Supported
H3. AI Dependence and Impact → Language learning by AI	0.354	0.038	9.268	0.000	Supported
4. AI Language Comprehension → Language learning by AI	0.3	0.049	6.143	0.000	Supported
H5. Gamification and Engagement of AI Language learning by AI	0.183	0.047	3.892	0.000	Supported
H6. Bias and Fairness in AI → Language learning by AI	0.136	0.051	2.684	0.008	Supported
H7. Teachers' Enthusiasm and comfort with AI → Language learning by AI	0.082	0.04	2.033	0.043	Supported

5. Discussion and conclusions

Proficiency in a second language, particularly English, is indispensable in today's globalized world, particularly for enhancing the educational outcomes of college students from non-English-speaking countries (Akther, 2022). Razoqey (2024) emphasizes that the importance of English as a universal language is even more pronounced in countries like Iraq, where it is often regarded as a second language. This study aimed to validate a questionnaire specifically designed to evaluate language learning facilitated by AI. To achieve this, EFA and CFA were employed. During the validation process, four items were removed during the EFA phase, and the CFA ultimately refined the instrument to include seven categories and 17 items.

5.1. Personalization, AI dependence, and adaptive feedback in AI language learning

The findings indicate that personalization, adaptive feedback, and smart learning environments significantly influence students' AI-assisted language learning. These results align with Wang et al.'s (2021) assertion that intelligent interaction and real-time feedback can compensate for the lack of social and instructional presence, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of online learning. Personalized learning environments cater to individual needs by providing tailored resources, learning paths, and collaborative opportunities. Such personalization is essential for improving the quality of learning and fostering student initiative (Kubilinskienė & Kurilov, 2020).

5.2. Technology acceptance in AI language learning

The TAM highlights a strong relationship between perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping user behavior (Davis, 1989). However, previous research has not fully explored how perceived and actual effectiveness impact AI-supported language learning. According to Wang et al. (2021), perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly enhance online learning experiences. This study incorporated these dimensions by linking gamification to perceived usefulness and fairness to ease of use. The results demonstrated that gamified elements within AI systems improved students' retention of language skills, while interactive AI activities enriched their overall learning experience. Additionally, the study revealed that AI tools effectively benefit students from diverse cultures, languages, and regional accents, underscoring their global applicability.

5.3. Teachers' enthusiasm in AI language learning

The study identified teacher enthusiasm as a key factor in AI-supported language learning. This finding aligns with Huang et al. (2024), who noted that self-efficacy for receptive skills mediates the relationship between generative AI acceptance, perceived teacher enthusiasm, and EFL learners' well-being. While teacher enthusiasm positively influences EFL learners' self-efficacy, it does not directly impact their well-being. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) demonstrated that teacher enthusiasm is a strong predictor of job

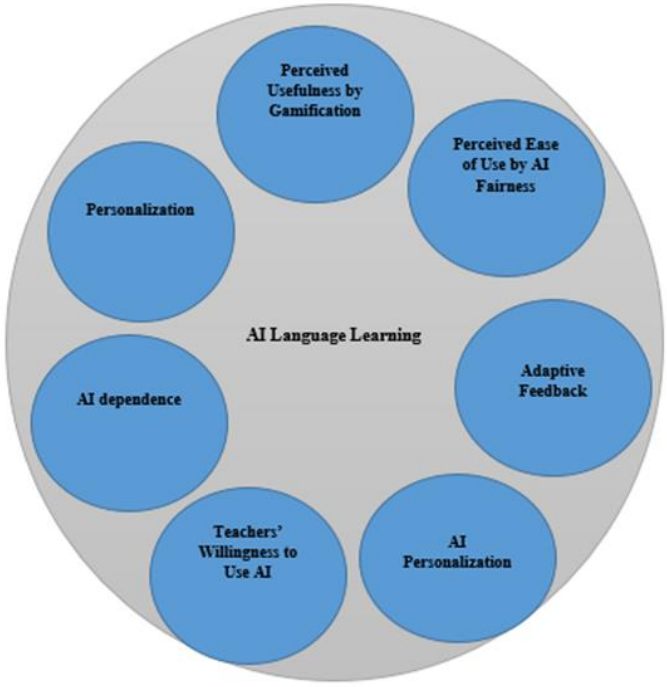
satisfaction. Consequently, both direct and indirect teacher enthusiasm significantly enhance learning outcomes for students.

5.4. Language comprehension by AI in language learning

The results regarding AI's role in language comprehension showed that Iraqi students generally had a positive perception of learning conversational contexts, complex language structures, and idiomatic expressions through AI. According to Patty (2024), the increasing integration of AI in language learning has sparked significant interest and debate. AI technology offers transformative potential as a tool for enhancing language learning through features such as automatic feedback, intelligent tutoring, and personalized learning experiences (Weng & Chiu, 2023). Additionally, AI systems contribute to online education by providing tailored learning experiences, automating routine teacher tasks, and enabling adaptive assessments (Seo et al., 2021).

Figure 6 illustrates the finalized AI Language Learning Model developed in this study.

Figure 6. AI language learning model



5.6. Future directions

This study developed and evaluated an AI language learning survey by integrating a framework based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and smart learning environments. Through a comprehensive literature review and educational experience, key contextual variables were incorporated into the proposed AI language learning model. Seven factors—personalization, adaptive feedback, AI dependence, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, teacher enthusiasm, and language comprehension—were

employed to analyze the impact of AI tools on language learning. The research utilized a carefully designed scale and an online questionnaire to collect data, and the model was experimentally assessed using SPSS 29 and SmartPLS 3. The hypotheses were tested through structural equation modeling. The study provided valuable theoretical advancements and practical insights; however, it also encountered some limitations. Future research could address these by conducting more detailed evaluations of variables such as age, gender, and educational background. Additionally, while using a homogeneous student sample allows for more focused theoretical analysis (Baek & Morimoto, 2012), the representativeness of the sample in this study poses a significant limitation. This may constrain the generalizability of the findings. To enhance the applicability and robustness of the model, future studies should consider expanding the sample size and diversifying its scope.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix: AI language learning survey

Category	Question	
Bias and Fairness in AI	1	Do you think that AI-based language learning tools help people from all countries and cultures the same?
	2	Do AI-based language learning tools fairly recognize and respond to a variety of regional accents without bias?
AI Dependence and Impact	3	How reliant do you think students become on AI-based language learning tools as compared to traditional learning methods?
	4	Do you think over-reliance on AI-based language learning tools could reduce students' ability to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills?
	5	Do you believe that depending too much on AI-based language learning tools could lead to the loss of traditional learning methods, such as memorization and handwriting?
AI Language Comprehension	6	Do AI-based language learning tools effectively understand language in different conversational contexts (e.g., formal vs. informal)?
	7	Do you feel AI-based language learning tools handle complex language structures (idioms, slang, etc.) effectively in language learning?
	8	Do AI-based language learning tools effectively translate or explain idiomatic expressions from one language to another?
AI Personalization Adaptation	9	To what extent do you believe AI-based language learning tools adapt to the unique needs of individual learners, especially those with learning disabilities?
	10	Do you think AI-based language learning tools can effectively adapt to different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)?
	11	Do AI-based language learning tools customize learning activities based on an individual's progress over time?
Adaptive AI Feedback	12	Do AI-based language learning tools adjust the difficulty level of exercises based on a learner's ongoing performance?
	13	How effectively do AI-based language learning tools provide immediate corrective feedback when a learner makes a mistake during language exercises?
Teachers' willingness and comfort with AI	14	How willing do you think teachers are to adopt AI-based language learning tools in your language classes?
	15	How comfortable do you believe teachers feel using AI-based language learning tools in their classrooms for language instruction?
Gamification and Engagement of AI	16	How effective are AI-based language learning tools' gamified elements in improving your retention of all language skills and knowledge?
	17	How engaging do you find the interactive activities (e.g., simulations, role-playing) provided by AI-based language learning tools in enhancing your language learning experience?

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The Intensification of Global Social Dynamics: The Case of ELT Textbooks in Iran

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Abstract

Globalization encompasses the growing interconnectedness of different aspects of human life worldwide, extending to economics, culture, politics, technology, and communication. While globalization has brought about positive outcomes such as cultural awareness and transnational cooperation, it has also raised concerns about favoring Western and English-language dominance, as well as creating disparities in educational opportunities and standards. This qualitative study aimed to investigate the extent to which ELT textbooks represent Western cultural values and to explore Iranian teachers' perceptions of globalization in ELT textbooks. *Top Notch 2A/2B* books were selected for content analysis, and 10 EFL teachers were purposefully chosen for interviews. The results revealed that global ELT textbooks contain cultural norms that conflict with Islamic and Iranian values, and that the interviewed teachers acknowledged cultural tensions between global and local textbooks. The study provides recommendations for curriculum developers to address these issues.

Keywords

globalization, localization, English language, culture, westernization

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in press

1. Introduction

ELT textbooks are vital tools in the education of language learners, providing structured resources alongside teachers. These textbooks, often categorized as global (Graddol, 2000; Gray, 2002; Garton & Graves, 2014), are used in various educational settings, including Iran. Research has shown that learners often view globalized English as an idealized standard (Iranmehr & Davari, 2017). As a result, many Iranian students attend private language institutes to prepare for international exams, such as TOEFL and IELTS. However, a discrepancy exists: the textbooks used in these private institutes are often more globalized than those employed in schools, potentially influencing learners' cultural identity.

Research has indicated that such globalized materials can promote the cultural values of Western countries, especially the USA and the UK, and may shape learners' perceptions in ways that conflict with local cultural contexts (Seidi et al., 2018). Moreover, these textbooks can influence learners' mental models (Kachru & Smith, 2008; Hall, 2016) and the ideologies they adopt (Nushi & Aghaei, 2024). According to Gray (2002), publishers of ELT materials convey a specific worldview through their content, which, while primarily designed for language instruction, also carries implicit cultural messages.

Given the significant role that ELT textbooks play in shaping both language proficiency and cultural perceptions, it is essential to critically examine the content of globalized textbooks. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the *Top Notch 2A/2B* textbooks and explore the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers regarding the impact of globalization on these materials. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how ELT textbooks can influence the development of learners' identities and the teaching practices surrounding them.

2. Literature review

Numerous studies have investigated the impact and role of globalization. For example, Safari and Razmjoo (2015) discussed the relationship between English language and globalization. The study emphasized that English proficiency is crucial for individuals to participate in today's globalized world, as it is the language of international communication. However, there are concerns about the dominance of English and its potential negative effects, such as cultural and linguistic imperialism. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers regarding English language globalization, hegemony, and its impact on learners' experiences. In the context of textbooks, Taki (2008) investigated the ideological choices in international ELT textbooks, revealing that these texts reflect the narratives of Western consumer culture. Another study by Naji Meidani and Pishghadam (2012) analyzed four popular English language textbooks in terms of their adherence to the concept of English as an International Language (EIL). This study aimed to examine the developmental pattern of the textbooks and their treatment of various aspects related to EIL. This research study disclosed the global status of English and its impact on the textbook publication industry. The spread of English as a global language has been closely linked to globalization, as English is extensively utilized as a global medium for business, commerce, tourism, and communication. The study's findings illuminated the portrayal of Inner Circle,

in press

Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle countries (drawing on Kachru, 1986), the recognition of non-native accents and dialogues from non-English speaking nations, the incorporation of learners' home cultures, and the representation of notable figures. The analysis aimed to identify the similarities and differences among the textbooks in terms of these aspects.

Research carried out by Mehrpour and Vojdani (2012) also demonstrated that the technological, sociological, and scientific elements facilitated or heightened by globalization have impacted the motivation of Iranian EFL learners, leading them to be more driven by practical considerations. Individuals seek to learn English primarily to gain access to scientific and technological knowledge, global economic opportunities, and higher education. In another study, Melliti (2013) investigated how globality is represented in the *Headway Intermediate* (H/I) coursebook, focusing on connectedness, appropriateness, and inclusivity. Using content analysis and a questionnaire completed by 251 users at the Institute Bourguiba for Living Languages, the study found that H/I only partially reflects globality, as learners' perceptions do not fully align with the coursebook's content. These findings highlight concerns about the suitability of global coursebooks for diverse learners and emphasize the need to localize EFL materials.

2.1. Cultural representation in ELT textbooks

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) examined how culture is represented in international and localized English textbooks in Iran, where localization is preferred in language education. Using categorization methods, the analysis revealed that localized textbooks were mostly culturally neutral, with few references to the target language (TL) or other cultures, and no representation of local culture. Sociological values were emphasized over aesthetic aspects. In contrast, international textbooks focused more on intercultural elements, particularly aesthetic culture, and included more TL cultural references. Another study by Farhang et al. (2016) explored globalization's impact on language policies, with a focus on English as a global language. The significance of intercultural communicative competence was highlighted. The study emphasized the need for language policies to address globalization and noted different countries' responses. Iran's English language learning policies, particularly the *Prospect* series, were explored to understand cultural aspects and the construction of Iranian or global identity. Similarly, Iranmehr and Davari (2017) insisted that despite the Iranian government's attempts to teach a localized version of English, which is embedded with Islamic values and culture and is taught in elementary schools and high-schools, globalized or international version of English, which is taught in private sectors, is going to attract increasing number of learners. From the Iranian learners' perceptions, globalized English is known as the distinguished and true English.

A different study by Hosseinzadeh et al. (2022) examined the cultural content of two popular English textbook series in Iran—*Touchstone* and the *Iran Language Institute (ILI)* series—given the importance of culture in language learning and textbooks as cultural tools. Using different frameworks, the analysis showed that *ILI* included all four cultural content types, though unevenly. In contrast, *Touchstone* emphasized target and international cultures, largely neglecting the source culture. Both series focused

in press

on aesthetic and sociological aspects of culture, with less attention to pragmatic and semantic elements. Chi-square tests revealed significant differences in cultural content and element representation between the two series.

2.2. The influence of English

Kazemi et al. (2017) examined the contents of ELT textbooks such as *American English File 1*, *Interchange 1*, *Top Notch 1*, and *Corners 1*. They found these textbooks are biased toward promoting Western cultural discourse, ideological frameworks, and consumerist societies. This tendency could potentially influence students' identities in Islamic nations, suggesting an unfair representation favoring Western perspectives. Borjian (2013) notes that, within the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran, English is perceived as the language of adversaries. However, despite government's efforts to break away from English monopoly and include other languages such as Chinese and Russian, all participants in Mazlum's (2022) study chose English as the first foreign language to learn, and the choice order of the participants were English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, and Arabic followed by Chinese and Italian. Participants explanations about their first choice were "English being international, scientific, educational and occupational rewards associated with English knowledge and getting to know other cultures" (Mazlum, 2022, p. 271). Lin (2013) contends that the extensive proliferation of English as the predominant language for global communication, combined with the effects of globalization, has resulted in significant implications for the language policies adopted by countries where English is not the native language. In the context of Iran, there has been a noticeable surge in the desire to acquire proficiency in English. This inclination can be attributed to the widespread influence of globalization.

2.3. Emerging trends in English language education

Chamani (2023) examined the impact of globalization on English language education in Iran. It acknowledged the growing demand for English language acquisition in Iran due to globalization and highlighted the need for language planning and policies that consider both local language ecology and the challenges posed by globalization. The research argued that traditional linear planning methods are insufficient for a rapidly changing and uncertain future and suggested employing scenario planning to explore alternative futures for English language education in Iran. The study emphasized the importance of incorporating stakeholder perspectives and diverse approaches in policy development and implementation to ensure desirable outcomes. In another study, Monfared (2025) examined the evolving concept of culture within the English as an International Language (EIL) framework from the perspective of Iranian and Turkish teachers, highlighting the importance of integrating EIL and culture in ELT programs and the role of professional development workshops, while advocating for further research on incorporating cultural issues in ELT classes. Finally, Dahmardeh and Mahdikhani (2025) analyzed the representation of culture in both locally-developed and internationally-published English textbooks. Their findings revealed that locally-developed textbooks highlight local culture, whereas international textbooks emphasized cultural products. The authors advocated for the inclusion of diverse cultural elements in English language teaching textbooks to foster intercultural competence.

in press

2.4. Need for further research on globalization in Iranian ELT context

Although a number of studies have explored the impact of globalization on English language teaching and the cultural content of ELT textbooks globally and within the Iranian context, there remains a lack of focused analysis on how globalization is specifically reflected in widely-used textbooks of *Top Notch 2A/2B*. Furthermore, while the Iranian context has been discussed in terms of policy (Farhang et al., 2016; Chamani, 2023) and learner motivation (Mehrpour & Vojdani, 2012), less attention has been paid to how globalization manifests textually and visually in textbooks that are not locally produced but are imported and adapted for Iranian learners. Given that *Top Notch* is one of the most popular international textbook series taught in Iran's private ELT sector, examining its content in light of globalization theories and cultural representation frameworks offers critical insights into the ideological and pedagogical implications of English language education in Iran.

This study, therefore, aims to fill this specific gap by providing a focused analysis of *Top Notch 2A/2B* and assessing how the texts portray global themes, identities, and cultural narratives, especially in the context of Iranian learners' exposure to globalized English. By doing so, the research contributes to the literature on ELT material analysis with a nuanced understanding of how globalization is embedded in pedagogical texts used in a non-Western educational setting. Hence, the research is guided by the following two research questions:

1. How does the *Top Notch 2A/2B* ELT textbook reflect the ideologies and cultural perspectives shaped by globalization, particularly in relation to Western dominance in English language teaching?

2. What are Iranian English language teachers' perceptions of the impact of globalization on their teaching practices and students' learning experiences?

These questions serve as the foundation for both the content analysis and the interviews, allowing the study to explore both theoretical content and real-world educational dynamics.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative design. It integrates content analysis and semi-structured interviews to explore the impact of globalization on English language education in Iran. In our study, content analysis serves as the primary method for examining the instructional ideology embedded in the widely used ELT textbook *Top Notch 2A/2B* (Saslow & Ascher, 2015). Semi-structured interviews with Iranian EFL teachers are also used to enrich our findings by providing firsthand insights. By integrating the content analysis of the textbooks and the thematic analysis of the interviews, we tried to enable a more robust and comprehensive investigation into how globalization influences both educational materials and the perspectives of those involved in teaching English as a foreign language.

in press

The content analysis followed the guidelines established by Krippendorff (2018), which emphasizes a nuanced examination of texts to uncover underlying themes and ideologies. This was complemented by interviews that allow for the collection of teachers' reflections, grounded in their own pedagogical experiences, on how globalization impacts their classroom practices and their students' engagement with the English language. The combination of these two methods enhances the study's objectivity and offers a deeper understanding of the global-local interplay in English language instruction in Iran (Creswell & Poth, 2016). While the content analysis serves as a more detached analysis of textbook materials, the interviews provide a subjective layer of insight that, when analyzed together, enables a balanced interpretation of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

3.1. Participants and recruitment

The participants in the interview component of the study were 10 Iranian English language teachers who currently teach at various language institutes in Iran. The selection of participants was based on purposive sampling, which ensures that the teachers possess relevant experience and expertise in teaching English in a globalized context (Patton, 2014). The participants were chosen to represent diverse backgrounds, including variation in age, gender, teaching experience, and the educational institution they work at, in order to capture a range of perspectives on globalization's impact. The teachers possessed a minimum of five years of experience, were at least 24 years old, and held at least a bachelor's degree in a field relevant to teaching English. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives, their unrestricted autonomy in choosing to participate, and their absolute right to confidentiality, ensuring their full understanding and agency in the research process.

3.2. Data collection method

The study employs two primary data collection methods: content analysis of the *Top Notch 2A/2B* textbook and semi-structured interviews with teachers.

3.2.1. Content analysis

Content analysis involved a detailed examination of the textbook to identify the underlying cultural ideologies and perspectives that align with globalization. The textbook's content was analyzed using techniques such as categorization and identification of recurring themes (Krippendorff, 2018). Special attention was paid to how issues of cultural representation, social roles, and global power dynamics are portrayed. The goal was to identify whether and how the textbook promotes a Western-centered ideology, and the ways in which it engages with global and local cultural identities.

3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews involved open-ended questions (see Appendix) derived from research questions. These questions were designed to explore the teachers' perceptions of globalization in relation

in press

to their teaching practices, particularly with respect to ELT textbooks. Interviews were conducted in Persian (the participants' native language) and then translated into English for analysis. The interview schedule was flexible to allow participants to share their experiences in their own terms while still addressing the research questions. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes in length. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and unique insights regarding the impact of globalization on teaching practices.

3.3. Data analysis

Data from both the content analysis and the interviews were analyzed separately but in a complementary manner.

3.3.1. Content analysis

The content analysis followed a structured coding process (Neuendorf, 2017). Textual elements, such as themes, topics, and visual representations in the *Top Notch 2A/2B* textbook, were categorized and analyzed for their cultural significance. The analysis focused on identifying the following categories:

Contents Classification: The topics and themes in the textbook, including cultural contrasts, entertainment, occupational issues, and interpersonal relationships.

Relations Classification: The portrayal of social interactions, such as familial, romantic, and customer-service dynamics.

Subject Positions Classification: The roles assigned to individuals, including those in commercial, societal, and occupational contexts.

3.3.2. Interview analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, the transcripts were read several times to familiarize the researcher with the content. Codes were then generated based on recurring themes related to the teachers' perceptions of globalization's influence on their teaching practices. Themes were organized into broader categories, with particular attention paid to any shifts in teaching strategies, classroom dynamics, and teacher attitudes toward the globalization of English.

A cross-method comparison was then made between the content analysis of the textbook and the findings from the teacher interviews to identify convergence and divergence between the textual materials and the lived experiences of the educators (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This integration of both methods contributed to a more holistic understanding of the impact of globalization on English language education in Iran.

in press

4. Results and discussion

In this section, we present the findings derived from both content and thematic analyses, ultimately drawing a connection between the two in an effort to enhance teachers' awareness of how they can mitigate the challenges posed by globalization. It should be noted that in the content analysis section, we provided examples from the pages where the theme was derived. The pages from *Top Notch 2A* and *Top Notch 2B* are consecutive, with pages 1 to 61 corresponding to *Top Notch 2A* and pages 62 to 125 corresponding to *Top Notch 2B*.

4.1. Content analysis of the textbook

One the most obvious themes against Islamic values in the books we analyzed was Hijab. Based on Mir-Hosseini (2007), the concept of Hijab, as interpreted by contemporary Muslim scholars, requires Muslim women to cover their entire bodies in public, except for hands and face. Since the early 20th century, Hijab has emerged as a central point of contention between traditionalism and modernity, symbolizing the liberation or oppression of Muslim women. The emergence of political Islam in the late 20th century further heightened this conflict, with Islamists perceiving Hijab as a marker of identity and protection, while secular feminists regard it as a form of oppression that undermines women's rights. The clash between these perspectives involves evaluating each other based on differing moral codes and values. In these books we see many times that students may face women without Islamic Hijab (e.g., pp. 5, 10, 13, 17, 32, 43, 45, 51, 54, 63, 65, 66, 73, 75, 77, 85, 87, 99, & 103).

Another theme is related to movies. Hollywood movies have frequently been considered conspicuous illustrations in debates concerning globalization and its cultural ramifications (Hozic, 2014). The pervasive influence of Western-centric movies, exemplified by productions such as *Titanic*, *Blood Diamond*, and *The Great Gatsby* (e.g., pp. 14 & 94), underscores a cultural dissemination that occasionally conflicts with the tenets of Islam. This cinematic influence is particularly pronounced in light of the comparative fragility of the Iranian movie industry. Consequently, this study can function as a cautionary admonition for the Iranian movie sector to strengthen itself and produce compelling cinematic works that not only resonate with domestic audiences but also effectively propagate the intrinsic values and cultural heritage of the nation. The imperative to counterbalance external influences and uphold the sanctity of Islamic values becomes all the more pressing in the face of an industry that is yet to attain the robustness required to assert its cultural narrative on a global scale.

Moreover, the captivating images (e.g., pp. 13 & 97) showcasing Europe's stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage could make it an appealing choice for people in Iran considering moving to another country. This prompts an inquiry into the rationale behind the absence of a similar portrayal of the captivating facets of our own nation. The existence of such imagery within our borders raises the pertinent question of why our diverse and picturesque landscapes are not being effectively showcased to foster a sense of national pride and encourage both internal and external appreciation. On the other hand, these books endeavor to acquaint learners with a diverse array of culinary traditions from various nations (e.g.,

in press

pp. 67 & 70). However, it is noteworthy that Persian food remains conspicuously absent from the enumerated compilations within the text. Such an omission may inadvertently convey the impression to an Iranian student that the dishes featured on these lists hold a superior status compared to their Persian counterparts. A salient example of this disparity lies in the inclusion of certain foods such as caviar, which, in the context of Iran, assumes a status of opulence and exclusivity. The exorbitant cost associated with these items renders them accessible primarily to affluent families, thereby perpetuating an implicit hierarchy of culinary prestige. Consequently, this absence of Persian culinary representation may inadvertently perpetuate a perception of the superiority of the foreign cultures, potentially engendering a sense of cultural marginalization for the Iranian student.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight the escalating prevalence of salon services that are specifically designed to enhance aesthetic appeal (e.g., pp. 50, 54, & 61). Within this overarching trend, the practices of manicures and pedicures are emerging as increasingly accepted and sought-after procedures within the cultural context of Iran. This surge in popularity can be attributed to shifting societal attitudes toward personal grooming and the growing acknowledgment of the positive impact that these services can have on an individual's overall well-being. This transformative phenomenon highlights the multifaceted impact of changing beauty norms and preferences on both individual well-being and the macroeconomic dynamics of the nation. In Iran, the practice of men receiving facials is not yet widespread (in contrast to page 51). When such treatments are sought, individuals typically patronize barbershops, where such services are commonly administered. It is noteworthy that these establishments generally lack female receptionists. This phenomenon can be construed as indicative of a globalized trend that may gain prevalence over time, akin to other evolving societal norms. Conversely, the reciprocal arrangement, wherein men serve as receptionists for women seeking haircut services, is not culturally approved in Iran (in contrast to page 54). The potential impact of these practices on Islamic values lies in the risk of normalization, whereby such actions may become accepted or commonplace. This raises a pertinent question concerning the expectations of Muslim scholars in Iran regarding the perpetuation of localized values. It prompts an exploration of whether modifications to traditional texts and teachings are requisite to align with evolving societal dynamics and values. These books also introduce practices such as tattooing and body piercing (e.g., p. 116), which were once considered uncommon or even taboo within Iranian familial contexts. Over recent years, there has been a noteworthy surge in the prevalence of these practices. As Hemphill and Blakely (2014, p. 99) noted:

> Youth now face a highly commodified world, where most things in their society meet the criteria of a commodity. Not only are goods and services the objects of consumption, but the body and culture have also become commodities. The commodification of the body, for instance, means that it is not only used to sell things in advertisements, but it is also an object that can be pampered, adorned, and improved by a broad range of therapies, regimens, diets, clothing, jewelry, tattoos, or piercings.

In Western societies, interpersonal relationships with individuals of the opposite gender (boyfriend-girlfriend) and engaging in dating practices are common. Conversely, Islamic teachings underscore the

In press

significance of matrimony and the establishment of familial bonds. As a precautionary measure against transgressions, Islam prohibits premarital relationships between individuals of the opposite gender. Consequently, the pursuit of romantic involvement with a boyfriend or girlfriend stands in direct contradiction to the core values espoused by the Islamic faith. Kazemi et al. (2017) observed that in the books they analyzed, references to boyfriend-girlfriend relationships appeared eight times more frequently than references to family member relationships. Similarly, our study has also identified this prominent trend. It is evident on numerous occasions that these books introduce the notion of engaging in social interactions with individuals of the opposite gender (e.g., pp. 77 & 117).

4.2. Interview analysis

The following analysis is based on a series of interviews with ten Iranian English language teachers, examining their perspectives on the impact of globalization on English language teaching in Iran. The findings reveal a range of responses, encapsulating both the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization in the Iranian ELT context. The teachers' insights collectively point to the necessity for a more context-sensitive, culturally inclusive, and communicative approach to English language education.

4.2.1. Theme 1: The role of globalization in English language teaching

Teachers generally defined globalization as the growing interconnectedness between nations, fueled by technological advancements, and its impact on language learning.

4.2.1.1. Sub-theme: Globalization as an opportunity for language learning

Teachers recognize that globalization opens doors to a variety of authentic resources. As Shirin (Teacher 4) explains, "Globalization has made English a necessity. Now, my students are learning English not only for academic reasons, but also for professional opportunities, as they aim to work in the globalized world." This sentiment is echoed by Kian (Teacher 9), who notes the accessibility of online learning platforms like Duolingo and YouTube, which have democratized language learning in rural and underprivileged areas.

4.2.1.2. Sub-theme: Globalization as a challenge

However, teachers also pointed to significant challenges. Many felt that globalization has imposed Western ideologies and cultural values into the curriculum. Faezeh (Teacher 3) shared, "While globalization brings exposure to global content, I often find that textbooks heavily reflect Western values. For example, discussions of family in textbooks do not align with the values of Iranian society." Nima (Teacher 2) adds that globalization has increased competition, making English proficiency a requirement for success in an increasingly globalized job market. This has created high pressure among students, as they must compete with their peers from countries with more developed ELT systems.

in press

4.2.2. Theme 2: Cultural sensitivity and balancing local identity

One of the most significant concerns for Iranian teachers in the face of globalization is the challenge of balancing local cultural norms with the globalized content often presented in English textbooks. Teachers emphasized the importance of ensuring that students do not feel alienated from their cultural heritage.

4.2.2.1. Sub-theme: Incorporating local content

Teachers use various strategies to incorporate local content into the curriculum. Amir (Teacher 5) shared, "When teaching about holidays, I always compare Western holidays like Christmas to our own celebrations, such as Nowruz. It helps students see that cultural practices around the world have value, not just Western ones." Similarly, Leila (Teacher 7) added that she integrates Persian literature and proverbs to provide cultural context, fostering students' pride in their heritage.

4.2.2.2. Sub-theme: Encouraging critical thinking

A key method for addressing the dominance of Western culture is promoting critical thinking. Roya (Teacher 10) said, "I encourage my students to critically engage with global content. When we read about American individualism, I ask them, 'What do you think about the role of community in Iran?' This kind of discussion makes them question stereotypes and form their own opinions."

4.2.3. Theme 3: The impact of globalization on students' attitudes and engagement

Teachers believed globalization has affected how students perceive English and Western culture, influencing their motivation and engagement with the language.

4.2.3.1. Sub-theme: Shifting attitudes toward English and western culture

Some teachers observed a positive shift in students' attitudes toward learning English, particularly as it relates to global career opportunities. Leila (Teacher 7) stated, "Students now see English as more than just a subject for exams; they see it as a way to access international job markets." However, there were also signs of cultural disconnection. Roya (Teacher 10) reflected, "While many students are motivated to learn English for professional reasons, some feel that Western content in textbooks is irrelevant to their lives."

4.2.3.2. Sub-theme: Increased competition and pressure

Globalization has led to heightened competition among students. Amir (Teacher 5) shared, "Students now face the pressure of competing on a global scale, especially when it comes to exams like IELTS. This often leads to anxiety and burnout." The competitive nature of language learning, driven by globalization, has become a double-edged sword.

in press

4.3. Conclusion: Addressing the challenges of globalization in ELT

The findings of this section of the study underscore the need for contextualized, culturally sensitive teaching materials and pedagogical strategies that better reflect local values while preparing students for the demands of a globalized world. The challenge lies in creating a balanced curriculum that incorporates both global and local perspectives.

4.4. Recommendations

Based on the insights provided by the teachers, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Diversify Teaching Materials: Textbooks should reflect a wider range of global and local cultural contexts to avoid the dominance of Western values. Local examples and Iranian cultural references should be incorporated alongside global content.

- Promote Critical Engagement: Teachers should promote critical thinking in students, urging them to reflect on global content and question cultural stereotypes. This can be done through discussion-based lessons and comparative analyses.

4.5. A nexus between globalization and local cultural sensitivity in ELT

The findings of both the interview-based analysis and the content analysis point to significant, albeit subtle, tensions between globalization and local cultural values in the context of English language teaching in Iran. While the interview data highlighted teachers' perceptions of globalization—ranging from the opportunities it provides to the challenges it imposes—the content analysis revealed how global cultural elements are embedded in the instructional materials used in Iranian classrooms. These elements often clash with the Islamic values and cultural norms prevalent in Iranian society.

This section attempts to merge both sets of findings, shedding light on the common themes that emerge in the intersection of globalized content and local Iranian identity. The goal is to demonstrate how English textbooks may inadvertently reinforce global ideologies that do not necessarily align with the Islamic and national cultural values of Iran, while also reflecting the teachers' strategies to manage this conflict in the classroom.

4.5.1. Theme 1: Western cultural ideologies in English textbooks

A central theme that emerged both from the interviews and content analysis is the dominance of Western values in English language textbooks, which is seen as a direct result of globalization. For example, Both the interview and content analysis highlighted the pervasive influence of Hollywood and Western media on students. The content analysis specifically noted the depiction of Hollywood movies such as Titanic

in press

and The Great Gatsby, which subtly promote Western ideologies—romanticized portrayals of love and individualism that directly conflict with Islamic teachings about relationships and family.

Teachers, such as Leila (Teacher 7), spoke about the pressure they feel to teach critical thinking in order to counterbalance Western cultural dominance. As she mentioned, "While Western movies and content are fascinating for students, I always make it a point to discuss the differences between what they see in these films and the values we hold dear in Iranian society. It's about building awareness."

This counteracting process of critical engagement, advocated by teachers, is in direct response to the globalization of media and its influence on Iranian students' perceptions of culture and values. The content analysis suggests that such textbooks need to be rebalanced, showing Iranian culture in its richness and diversity, rather than focusing predominantly on the Western way of life.

4.5.2. Theme 2: Cultural representation and national identity

A strong theme that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews and the content analysis of *Top Notch 2A/2B* is the need for better representation of Iranian culture in ELT materials. Globalization has led to a one-sided portrayal of the world, often ignoring Iranian traditions, foods, and landscapes.

4.5.2.1. Sub-theme: Omissions of Iranian cultural heritage

In the content analysis, it was noted that Persian food and Iranian landscapes were conspicuously absent from the textbooks. This omission can create a sense of cultural marginalization for Iranian students, making them feel that their culture is inferior to that of the West. Roya (Teacher 10) raised a similar concern in her interview: "Students often comment on how Western foods and landmarks are glorified in the textbooks, while we never see our own culture celebrated. This can lead them to believe that other cultures are more sophisticated."

Both sets of findings point to the importance of integrating Iranian cultural content into English language learning. Teachers have the power to modify content by introducing local cultural references during their lessons, but this practice needs to be institutionalized in textbooks as well. Amir (Teacher 5) advocates for this integration, stating, "It's crucial to show students that Persian culture is equally valuable. When we discuss topics like food, I always bring in examples from Persian cuisine, like Fesenjan and Kebabs, to show that there is beauty in our own traditions."

4.5.3. Theme 3: Globalization's influence on youth culture and identity

A recurring theme in both analyses is the impact of globalization on youth culture in Iran, particularly in relation to beauty standards and social norms.

in press

4.5.3.1. Sub-theme: Globalized beauty norms

The content analysis pointed out the increasing popularity of Western beauty practices, such as manicures and pedicures, which have become more acceptable in Iran due to the influence of globalization. Teachers, such as Leila (Teacher 7), reported that students are increasingly exposed to Western beauty ideals through media, creating a shift in Iranian youth culture. However, she also noted, "While I understand the growing demand for these services, it's important to remind students of the values of modesty and how we can incorporate Iranian beauty traditions, like Persian handcrafts and natural beauty practices, into the global conversation."

This changing landscape of beauty and fashion highlights the cultural tension between traditional Iranian values and the globalized norms that students are encountering. Nima (Teacher 2) reinforced this point, acknowledging the increasing acceptance of globalized beauty trends but also emphasizing that Iranian students must learn to navigate these trends thoughtfully.

4.5.3.2. Sub-theme: Interpersonal relationships and romanticization of western norms

Both sets of findings emphasize the conflict between Western-style dating and Islamic views on relationships. The content analysis specifically mentioned how Western textbooks often normalize boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, a concept that directly contradicts Islamic teachings regarding pre-marital relationships. Teachers, such as Kian (Teacher 9), noted that students often come to class with misunderstandings about relationships, influenced by the Western content they are exposed to. Kian explained, "I always encourage students to differentiate between what they see in movies or textbooks and what aligns with our cultural values regarding family and marriage."

4.6. Recommendations for a balanced approach

From integrating the findings of the interview-based and content analysis discussions, it is evident that there is a pressing need for ELT textbooks to become more culturally inclusive and context-sensitive. Globalization, while offering many opportunities, also presents cultural challenges for Iranian educators and students. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

A) Revise ELT Textbooks: There should be a deliberate effort to incorporate Iranian cultural references such as local traditions, food, landscapes, and religious values alongside global content. This will help students feel more connected to their own identity while engaging with the world.

B) Promote Cultural Awareness: Teachers should be equipped with training to help students navigate global cultural influences critically. This can be achieved by encouraging discussions on cultural differences and highlighting the importance of cultural diversity.

in press

C) Include Local Values in Teaching Materials: While globalization cannot be ignored, teaching materials must reflect Iranian values, especially in sensitive areas like gender roles, family structures, and beauty norms, in order to avoid promoting cultural dissonance among students.

By bridging the gap between global content and local values, Iran's ELT system can provide a more inclusive, culturally aware, and engaging educational atmosphere for students, allowing them to navigate the complexities of globalization without losing sight of their cultural identity.

5. Conclusion

This study tried to explore the intricate interplay between globalization and local cultural values in the context of English language teaching in Iran. By combining a qualitative content analysis of the *Top Notch 2A/2B* textbooks with interviews of Iranian English language teachers, the research delved into how globalization, through the lens of ELT materials and teacher practices, impacts both the cultural perceptions and educational experiences of Iranian English language learners.

The content analysis showed that Western cultural elements—such as the portrayal of women without hijab, the focus on Western landscapes and culinary traditions, and the promotion of individualism—are pervasive in ELT textbooks. These representations often conflict with Islamic values and Iranian cultural norms, creating a tension between globalized content and local identity. Such conflicts are not simply theoretical; they have real implications for students, particularly in terms of how they navigate their cultural identity in a globalized world.

Similarly, the interview findings revealed that teachers are deeply aware of these cultural tensions. While they acknowledge the opportunities globalization brings, including exposure to international perspectives and practices, they also face challenges in reconciling global content with the local cultural context. Teachers in Iran strive to balance these influences by introducing local values, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering cultural pride among students. Their practices highlight the importance of being context-sensitive and reflective in adapting ELT materials to ensure they resonate with Iranian students while avoiding cultural alienation.

Moreover, the analysis underscored the need for a more inclusive and culturally relevant approach to English language teaching. Both the interview data and content analysis emphasize that Iranian students should not only be exposed to global ideas but should also feel a sense of cultural pride in their own heritage. The omission of Iranian culture, particularly in areas such as food, landscapes, and traditions, from textbooks, was seen as a missed opportunity to cultivate national pride and foster a more balanced worldview for students.

The recommendations emerging from this study point to the necessity of revising ELT textbooks to include Iranian cultural references and to ensure that globalization is approached with critical awareness. Textbooks should not solely reflect Western ideals, but also provide a nuanced view of global diversity. This can be achieved by integrating local culture, traditions, and values into the materials while also

in press

encouraging students to engage with global issues in a way that respects both local identity and international perspectives.

While globalization undeniably shapes English language teaching, the findings of this study suggest that global content can coexist harmoniously with local cultural values if educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers work together to create contextually appropriate materials that reflect both global and local perspectives. As teachers continue to adapt and negotiate the complexities of globalization, their role in fostering cultural awareness and critical thinking remains pivotal in guiding students through the globalized educational landscape without losing sight of their cultural roots. By doing so, Iranian students can be empowered to navigate the world with a sense of pride in their own heritage, while also gaining the skills and perspectives needed to thrive in a globalized world.

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Appendix: Interview questions

1. How do you define globalization, and what role do you think it plays in the context of English language teaching in Iran?

2. How has globalization affected the way you approach teaching English in your classroom?

3. Do you think Western values and ideologies are reflected in the English textbooks you use? If so, how?

4. In what ways do you think the globalization of English influences your students' learning experience?

5. How do you balance local cultural norms with the globalized content presented in English language textbooks?

6. Have you noticed any shifts in your students' attitudes toward English and Western culture as a result of globalization? Can you share any specific examples?

7. Do you feel that globalization has created more opportunities or challenges for English language learners in Iran? Why?

8. How would you describe the cultural content of the materials you use in your teaching? (Follow-up if needed: Do you notice any patterns or dominance of particular cultures? If so, how do you respond to that in your teaching?)

in press

9. In your opinion, how should English language teaching in Iran evolve to better respond to the challenges posed by globalization?

10. What changes, if any, have you made in your teaching methods due to the influence of globalization?

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Implications of Agile Working on Consistency in Localized Content

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Abstract

Despite its relatively recent presence, localization has gone through multiple phases of evolution. However, little is known about the general framework that it has come to, as it started with the waterfall method and has got to the agile management method. This paper starts off with how the agile working method is applied in the localization cycle. Then, it explores the impact of agility on the translation consistency and the position of the language agent in the process. A corpus was used as a starting point to design a translator-oriented survey addressing inconsistency issues in light of agile practices, such as fast delivery, teamwork, and repetitive iterations. The textual corpus shows questionable textual inconsistencies which can be associated with the agile working framework, such as terminology and tagline/description incoherence. The survey received 38 answers, providing deeper insights into the translator's point of view with regard to consistency, which should help in pointing out the weaknesses of the process. The answers reveal tendencies about how challenging consistency is, which aspects of the localized content are more challenging than others, and how consistency is maintained.

Keywords

agile translation; corporate websites; localization; translation consistency; translation quality

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in press

1. Introduction

The evolution of translation practices has been significantly influenced by advancements in technology and shifts in project management methodologies. Since its beginning, the localization industry has developed both content- and technology-wise simultaneously. As for the workflow, it was initial and unstructured in 1985–1995, structured in 1995–2005, and virtual starting from 2005 (Schäler, 2008, p. 198). This evolution also reflects the change of work management within development teams, which is represented by the Agile Manifesto announced by a team of developers in 2001. Agile working has become the norm in almost every virtually-performed work nowadays, including localization. In recent years, the traditional, linear model of translation has been increasingly challenged by more dynamic, iterative approaches such as agile translation. This shift reflects broader trends in global business operations, where agility and responsiveness are prized attributes. This paper encapsulates this critical examination of the contrasting paradigms in translation management and their impact on the quality of localized content. Junker (2023, p. 2) notes that most research on agile working now is on software development and is done by researchers in information systems. This highlights the need for parallel research in Translation Studies (TS).

Agile translation promotes a collaborative, flexible, and iterative process[1]. This method allows continuous feedback, frequent updates, and adaptive planning, which are particularly beneficial in fast-paced industries where content needs to be promptly and accurately localized to keep up with market demands. Agile translation is:

> a technology-dependent translation management method used mostly in localization, whose practices can be followed partly or completely to ensure fast and small-batched delivery of translations, and iterative linguistic testing and bug fixing, while facilitating communication between agents and/or with the client in a time- and space-flexible manner. (Kassawat, 2024)

Hollstein and Rosa (2023) categorize acceleration in terms of technology, social change and the pace of life. They define social acceleration, for example, as "an increase in quantity of one sort or another per unit of time" (Hollstein & Rosa, 2023, p. 710). This applies to current translation practices, where quantity is being redefined (words, segments, strings, screen in an app). These chunking practices are essential in agile translation and need to be examined. This paper explores the implications of adopting agile working methods in translation projects, and examines how translators deal with consistency challenges in the agile cycle.

To start with, a brief overview will be provided about agile working and how it has been integrated into translation. It will be followed by an explanation of the difference between agile methods and older – but still used to a certain extent – methods like waterfall, and a few paragraphs about agility in the translation

[1] https://lokalise.com/blog/agile-localization Accessed on 02 March 2025

in press

industry. Then, the methodology of the study will be detailed, and followed by an illustration of the results with a discussion.

2. Review of literature

2.1. What is agile working?

The term "agile" is not new and was used before the agile manifesto. The term itself and the agile methods appeared in academic research in the 1990s, mainly in the industrial manufacturing and logistics management areas. Terms such as "agile manufacturing" (Kidd, 1995; Shewchuk, 1998), "agile supply chain" used as a response to cope with uncertainties (Bal et al., 1999), as well as "agile assembly systems" (Arai et al., 2000), were used to refer to the acceleration of assembly systems in order to improve the competitiveness of firms (Gunasekaran, 1999). The goal was to achieve higher levels of quality while ensuring more flexibility with lower costs and shorter product life cycles (Plonka, 1997). The need to deliver products fast was also critical in such domains though minimizing the "time-to-market" and using new technologies for global communication (Bunce & Gould, 1996). With the increasing reliance on new technologies such as the Internet, new digital products have become in demand too. The fast-changing nature of the technology industry started to be thought of as the beginning of the use of agile working methods (Cohen et al., 2004, p. 3), even though these methods were already applied in other industries. From another perspective, the "open source" method may have also paved the way in the 1980s for the later expansion of agile working, since the former was anti-capitalist and aimed to provide free accessible software, seeking freedom from funding entities, control and management (Boboc & Metzger, 2020). The adoption of agility in the high-tech industry was, according to Boboc & Metzger (2020), due to the inability of customers to "definitively state their needs up front, while at the same time, expecting more from their software". The agile mode of work was ironically described to be based on the Californian start-up myth whose spirit would surely turn towards innovation (Benedetto-Meyer Marie & Anca Boboc, 2021, p. 118; Boboc & Metzger, 2020). Agile working has expanded into many contexts and is no longer limited by manufacturing or technology. It now represents a wider range of activities as it includes liberation from traditional structuring of work through temporal and spatial flexibility (Izak et al., 2023) (empowered by the increasing possibility of virtual work), engaging in innovative activities, and utilizing new communication and digital technologies to better respond to priorities (Grant, 2020). This can be applied to almost every virtually-performed job nowadays, but this paper will focus on the localization industry and the jobs of "localization language agents" (LLAs) (Kassawat, 2022, p. 260) in particular. This term will be used interchangeably with 'language agent'. The term is to include translators, reviewers, post-editors, and any other agents involved in translating the text.

2.2. Waterfall versus agile working

Waterfall and agile working methods share several points, as the former paved the way for the latter. In general, the agile method aims to deliver functioning products fast through short iterations while ensuring collaboration and product ownership for each team member (Tripp et al., 2016). It follows a loop-based

In Press

structure. The waterfall method, though, is based on a linear structure, that is, repetitions or corrections are not tolerated during the process, which obliges teams to finish all the steps before they can reiterate. This strict process is considered to be time-consuming and can be costly. However, the agile method is more flexible as it tolerates adaptation (Cohen et al., 2004, p. 5) and reduces the cycle time, which are sought-after objectives in the context of an economy, characterized by acceleration and innovation (Boboc & Metzger, 2020). In fact, the term "sprints" is often used in the agile method, which indicates the importance of time limitation and fast delivery goals. A sprint in agile working is a short, time-limited period, usually four weeks (Cohen et al., 2004) during which the team should complete a set amount of work or a specific small objective or phase. The term is influenced by sports, where a sprint is defined as "a footrace over a short distance with an all-out or nearly all-out burst of speed, the chief distances being 100, 200, and 400 metres and 100, 220, and 440 yards".

Both methods have been used in localization. According to Kabát (2023), the waterfall method is considered as time consuming due to starting the localization cycle only after the release, and keeping the strings locked until the end of localization. This strict plan makes it difficult to update a translation or fix a bug as soon as it appears. Agile working, however, integrates localization in the development process, allowing bugs to be fixed during or after the publication of the product, and the product to be released despite the issues (Kabát, 2023).

2.3. Agility in the localization industry

In the dynamic landscape of the localization industry, agility has become a cornerstone for managing translation and localization processes. This shift is evident as localization efforts are increasingly integrated into the product creation phase rather than being treated as a post-development task. This approach, known as "continuous localization"[1][2], allows for real-time translation of new content while it is being developed. Consequently, when new product versions are released, LLAs and localization experts are ready to localize the incremental changes. This system filters smaller amounts of content continuously, avoiding the need for massive updates and ensuring that localized versions remain current with the product's development[3].

The adoption of continuous localization offers several advantages. Primarily, it significantly enhances efficiency. By localizing content as it is being produced, there is a reduction in the backlog of content that traditionally accumulates in the waterfall localization model. Additionally, accessibility is simplified, since platforms are employed to manage localization tasks instead of relying on the exchange of files and emails. This not only streamlines the workflow but also supports sustainable development[4] by maintaining a steady pace of localization activities, thus distributing the workload more evenly over time.

[1] https://poeditor.com/blog/what-is-continuous-localization Accessed on 02 March 2025
[2] https://www.transifex.com/blog/2023/what-is-continuous-localization Accessed on 02 March 2025
[3] https://www.marstranslation.com/blog/agile-translation-a-quick-guide Accessed on 02 March 2025
[4] https://phrase.com/blog/posts/translation-management-agile-localization Accessed on 02 March 2025

However, continuous localization is not without its challenges. It demands substantial effort and resources to maintain the seamless integration of translation processes into the ongoing product development. Proper coordination between language agents and developers is crucial to ensure that localization keeps pace with product changes. Moreover, the rapid pace of continuous localization can sometimes lead to compromised quality, as there is less time for thorough review and editing compared to the more deliberate waterfall localization process.

Despite these challenges, the use of machine translation (MT) within continuous localization frameworks can offer a viable solution. However, it is important to recognize the significant drawbacks associated with this approach. MT often produces lower-quality translations that can undermine the overall user experience. Despite accepting the trade-off by some stakeholders[6] due to the benefits of continuous updates and corrections, the initial drop in quality is a critical concern. Unlike the waterfall approach, where all elements must be perfected prior to release, continuous localization allows for ongoing refinements, as new or modified strings are automatically identified for the localization experts and language agents to work on[1]. This iterative process can lead to a cycle of perpetual corrections, which may never fully resolve the quality issues introduced by the hasty initial translations. Consequently, continuous localization can ensure timely updates, but it may result in a product that struggles to meet the high-quality standards expected by users despite the continuous tweaks.

3. Method

3.1. Background on the study

A previous study was conducted on localization quality, analyzing an English-Arabic corpus of 2524 product blurbs from fifteen international corporate websites (furniture, high-tech, and cosmetics). The analysis focused on issues that prevent the text from functioning (e.g. lack of comprehensibility and logic of the message), and creative translations which include specific elements expected in advertising texts, such as metaphors, cultural references, and play on words (Kassawat, 2022). The study resulted in 283 blurbs, and issues were found in 192 blurbs. It also resulted in website-based general observations which indicate a lack of consistency in the translation approach of terminology used within the same website, as in using transliteration, English naming, and translation for product names interchangeably in the same website (Kassawat, 2022). However, as consistency and agile working aspects were not within the scope of that study, those observations were not analyzed more deeply. Therefore, the resulting corpus of 283 blurbs has been re-examined to explore inconsistencies in light of the agile method. Besides terminology, inconsistency was spotted in terms of the lack of coherence between the tagline and description of the blurbs. While the reason cannot be traced by an outsider, it is commonly known now that agile working is the used method, and can be responsible to a great extent of such issues.

[1] https://lokalise.com/blog/agile-localization Accessed on 02 March 2025

3.2. Textual quality

The following examples should highlight how agile translation can impact the quality due to the process or the pressure put on the agents. The survey which I will detail later will also reveal the issue from an insiders' perspective.

Example 1 below is about a furniture product consisting of a seat and shoe storage. It contains an accuracy issue due to inconsistency with the tagline. The first sentence of the body paragraph 'Have a seat while putting on your shoes' was translated as اجلس بينما تكون مرتديًا حذاءك (Sit with your shoes put on). The Arabic version can be confusing for a user who does not have or understand the English or any other version at hand. They will wonder why they should put on their shoes before or while sitting down on the seat, and they cannot be barefooted while sitting on the bench. Such approach can be due to chunking in the agile cycle, the use of MT and/or the speed required to deliver the translation without allowing enough time or providing enough context on the function of the product.

Table 1. Example 1, taken from the product advertisement of a furniture product[1]

RT	HEMNES Bench with shoe storage, white Have a seat while putting on your shoes. The simple, classical design with a touch of tradition looks great with other furniture in the HEMNES series.
TR	HEMNES مقعد مع وحدة تخزين للأحذية, أبيض اجلس بينما تكون مرتديًا حذاءك. التصميم الكلاسيكي البسيط بلمسة تقليدية يبدو رائعًا مع قطع الأثاث الأخرى من مجموعة HEMNES.
BT	HEMNES Bench with shoe storage unit, white Sit with your shoes put on. The simple, classical design with a traditional touch looks great with other furniture in the HEMNES collection.

Example 2 is for a blurb of a lip gloss whose main characteristic is to make the lips look shiny. The Arabic tagline is inconsistent with the body text as it introduces the notion of softness as if it is the main characteristic of the product, instead of the glossy effect which is the focus in the first sentence of the body text. This can be caused by the lack of context. In localization, it is very common to send fragments of the text to the translation team, where the tagline can be sent to an agent and the body text to another.

Table 2. Example 2, taken from the blurb of a lip gloss[2]

RT	hervana ultra plush berry pink lip gloss Pure lip bliss! Our plush glosses glide on extra smooth and feel ahhh-mazing. The six irresistible shades,

[1] https://www.ikea.com Accessed on 18 April 2019
[2] https://www.benefitcosmetics.com Accessed on 19 April 2019

in press

	from sultry nudes to punchy pinks, come in soft-squeeze tubes with a custom tip designed for perfectly even application.
TR	مستحضر hervana ultra plush ملمع شفاه وردي توتي شفاه في غاية النعومة! تنساب مستحضراتنا لتلميع الشفاه بكل نعومة وتجعلك تبدين رائعة. يتوفر هذا المستحضر في ست درجات ساحرة، من درجات النود الجذابة إلى الدرجات الوردية المثيرة، ويأتي في أنابيب من السهل الضغط عليها مع طرف صمّم خصيصا لتطبيق متناغم مثالي.
BT	The hervana ultra plush product berry pink lip gloss Very soft lips! Our lip gloss products glide smoothly and make you look great! This product comes in six charming shades, from attractive nude shades to alluring pink shades, and it comes in soft-squeeze tubes with a tip designed especially for perfectly even application.

Example 3 was retrieved from a high-tech corporate website, and presents a camera function of a mobile phone. The English text focuses on the wide angle of the camera which allows to include more people in the shot. The translation of the body text was accurate, but the tagline changed the meaning completely from 'Get everyone in the shot' into صورة تجميع بين الجميع (A collage image among everyone). While the tagline was creative, using a rhetorical device in 'tajmee' and 'jamee' which rhyme, it changed the intended message and function of the product. Instead of showing how everyone will be in one photo, it referred to having a photo made up of several images using the collage technique. The creativity efforts were lost due to inconsistency with the body text and, possibly, the lack of context in case the tagline and the body were worked on by different agents.

Table 3. Example 3, taken from a high-tech corporate website[1]

RT	Get everyone in the shot Selfies with friends have never looked better. The GALAXY Grand Prime has a 5MP front camera with an ultra-wide view angle of 85 degrees. The wider angle of view means you can get more of your friends and more of the background in every shot—and leave the selfie stick at home. The high resolution ensures you'll get crisper, more awesome photos that you can't wait to post.
TR	صورة تجميع بين الجميع استمتع بصور ذاتية مع الأصدقاء لم يسبق لها مثيل. حيث يتمتع هاتف GALAXY Grand Prime بكاميرا أمامية بدقة ٥ ميجابكسل بزاوية عرض فائقة الاتساع تبلغ ٨٥ درجة. وتتيح لك هذه الزاوية العريضة التقاط صور تجمع المزيد من الأصدقاء وخلفية أكبر في كل لقطة - واستمتع بالصور الذاتية التي تملأ جنبات المنزل. وتضمن الدقة العالية الحصول على صور أوضح وأكثر نقاءً ستشعر بالرغبة في نشرها على الفور.
BT	A collage image among everyone Selfies with friends have never looked better. The GALAXY Grand Prime has a 5MP front camera with an ultra-wide view angle of 85 degrees. The wider angle of view means you can get more of your friends and more of the background in every shot—and leave the selfie stick at home. The high resolution ensures you'll get crisper, more awesome photos that you can't wait to post.

[1] http://www.samsung.com: Accessed on 22 April 2019.

3.3. Survey design and distribution

Given the reexamination above, it was necessary to understand the process behind the scenes. In other words, poor translation quality does not have to be the result of an unexperienced translator. The chunking process, which also implies reiterations and team work, can lead to similar inconsistencies and issues affecting the quality. A survey was designed to address aspects of agile translation, such as update frequency, text fragmentation, and consistency, in addition to the use of available resources such as translation memories, style guides, and glossaries. The survey, distributed using Google Forms, was only sent to translators specialized in localization as they define themselves on LinkedIn (Desjardins, 2017, p. 108). Private messaging was mainly used to contact 90 translators. Only 38 responded to the survey with a response rate of 42.2%. This was expected due to the limited translation area, and the response rate obtained in a previous study with a similar methodology (Kassawat, 2024). The answers were being similar over time, which indicated a sufficient sample for the purpose of the study.

The survey (detailed in the appendix) started with questions about the status, experience, content type(s) the respondents work on, and frequency of collaborating with other team members. Personal demographic information was not requested due to its irrelevance for the study and the extra time it would take from the respondents. The second section of the survey focused on the workflow. It included questions on the frequency of receiving small projects or incremental updates, and how they manage those updates. The survey then presented questions on ensuring consistency and the impact of the workflow on consistency. The last section investigated how they deal with consistency challenges in terms of several aspects such as terminology, style, and formality.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Overview of the participants

The majority of the respondents (32) work off-site, four work on-site, and two have a hybrid status. Their experience was less than five years (6 respondents), five to ten years (16 respondents), and more than ten years (16 respondents). Most of them work on a mix of several products (24 respondents), while 8 work on website localization. The remaining respondents work on games (4), software (1), and subtitling (1). For more details on the nature of content they handle, 25 work on marketing/commercial content, 24 work on user interface content, 17 work on help content, and 17 work on technical texts. Fewer are the ones who work on legal (10 respondents), humanitarian (2 respondents), official (4 respondents), medical (5 respondents), and other (12 respondents) content. The frequency of collaboration with other team members varied from “Almost always” (11 respondents), “Often” (17 respondents), “Occasionally” (6 respondents), “Rarely” (3 respondents), and “Never” (1 respondent). Therefore, coordination with other translators is a part of the professional life of the majority of the respondents.

in press

4.2. Regular updates and consistency

Their answers regarding the frequency of receiving partial updates rather than a complete project varied from "Very often" (8 respondents), "Often" (9 respondents), "Occasionally" (12 respondents), "Rarely" (6 respondents), and "I don't know" (3 respondents). When new content is added or an update is made to the content, 24 respondents handle updates independently, as continuation of the initial work, while nine respondents have a handover or briefing process to ensure consistency, three stated that updates are assigned to different agents, and two reported other approaches such as having direct channels to consult agents who previously worked on a project. One respondent was not able to specify a unified way due to working with different clients and processes.

When the respondents were asked "How do you typically ensure terminology consistency when working on large projects or projects with frequent updates?", the majority (27 respondents) reported using company-provided glossaries or translation memory tools, five rely on personal glossaries and translation memories, and three collaborate with other team members, and three others reported using a mix of those solutions. These results correspond with their answers about the resources they find most helpful for maintaining general consistency when they manage updates. The majority (22) think that translation memories are most helpful, four chose style guides, eight chose communication with other team members, and four chose all the options, depending on the project. No one chose regular feedback sessions, which can be considered normal, since consistency issues are dealt in the moment of translating rather than waiting for the session. It can also be an unnecessary procedure for consistency but more helpful for other aspects in the process, such as sharing tips and recommendations. Interestingly, while collaborating with other team members was relatively high (28 respondents reported collaborating often or very often), this solution is not used as often to maintain consistency. This can be due to the time it takes to contact another agent, the overwhelming number of projects that makes it difficult to remember what they did, or the availability of other more helpful resources.

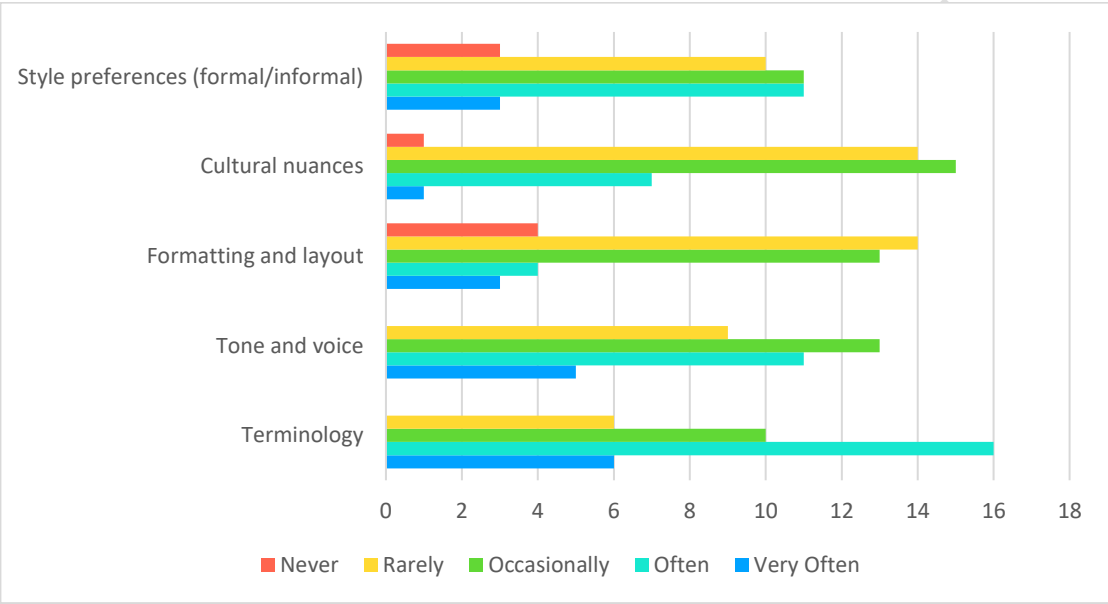
4.3. Consistency maintenance

When asked for their opinion regarding the impact of frequent updates and multiplicity of contributors on the consistency of language, tone, and style across different parts of the text, 18 respondents reported a moderate impact, 14 reported a significant impact, while 6 reported a minor impact. No one reported a zero impact. No relationship was observed between the status and the impact from the respondents' point of view. In other words, being an on-site agent, for example, does not improve the agent's impression of the process, nor does it reduce the impact on the quality. Despite the agreement regarding the negative impact on consistency, most of the respondents (20) find it "Somewhat easy" to maintain consistency when updates are introduced, 14 respondents find it "Somewhat difficult", two think that it is "Very easy" and two find it "Very difficult". No relationship was found between the years of experience and the difficulty of maintaining consistency. This tendency can be interpreted by the dependence of translators on the company's offered resources, such as glossaries and translation memories, which help translators stay consistent with previous works.

in press

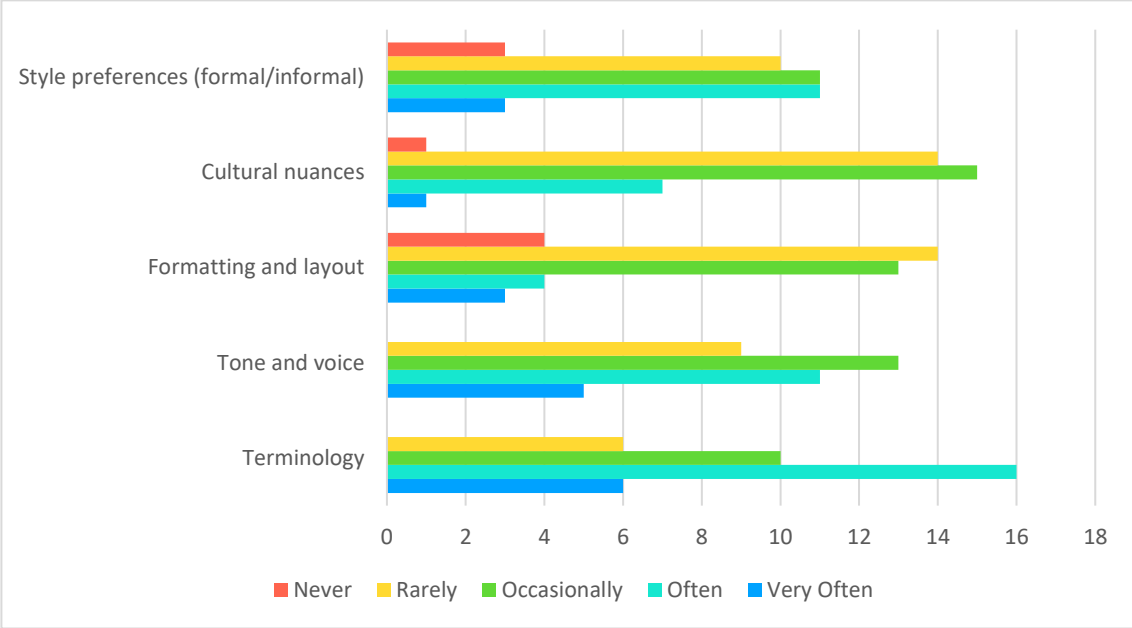
Responses on area-specific questions provided more insights. Figure 1 below illustrates how keeping consistency is most challenging in terminology, where 22 respondents said "Very Often" and "Often", then in tone and voice, as 16 responded similarly, and in style preferences, with 14 with the same level of challenges.

Figure 1. In your experience, how often do translation updates create challenges in ensuring the following aspects are consistent?



While almost half (14) of the participants found that keeping consistency in general is "Very difficult" or "Difficult", they also found the consistency of terminology "Very often" or "Often" challenging. This tendency indicates that terminology is the main consistency challenge. However, this is an unexpected trend due to the availability of glossaries that are often integrated in the translation tool. It can be due to the regular term updates to the glossary and polluted translation memories which do not serve the agents enough in their mission. The results were also consistent with their answers regarding the high frequency of feedback they receive about the inconsistency of terms, illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. In your experience, how often do translation updates create challenges in ensuring the following aspects are consistent?

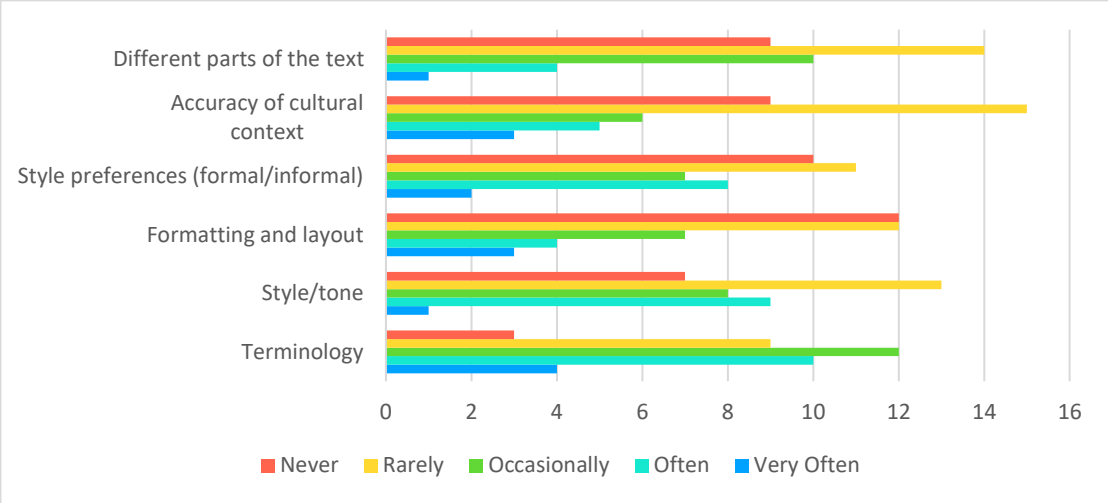


I should note here that another aspect "Different parts of the text (e.g., title and body paragraph)" was introduced in light of the lack of context they may have and the textual sample I started from for this study.

4.4. Consistency and feedback loops

Figure (3) shows that 14 respondents receive feedback about the consistency of terminology "Very often" or "Often". A similar trend was observed with style and tone (10 respondents), and style preferences (10 respondents). Consistency between the different parts of the text was not among the problematic areas which receive feedback. This can be due to focusing on more important aspects of a product, such as the product name or brand translation, which might lead to legal issues. Moreover, the agents who send the feedback do not have to be translation specialists to be able to flag incoherence or meaning nuances such as the ones provided earlier.

Figure 3. How often do you receive feedback from clients or project managers about the need for maintaining consistency in the following areas?



4.5. Quality risks

The textual corpus showed how the translation quality is often compromised in the localization industry due to opting for faster solutions which ensure functioning, but not error-free localized texts. The survey responses showed how the fast-paced delivery and updates can often be challenging for the language agents, and were reported to have a negative impact on the final quality. On the contrary, agile manufacturing originally focuses on the quality (Plonka, 1997) despite the fast delivery requirements. The results should question the current practices of adopting agile methods, given how these methods have been used in factories. Ironically, both virtually-localized or digital products, and physical products are made to satisfy consumers, but the conceptualization and delivery of the quality are different. Agile translation might be time- and cost-efficient, but it entails many risks that can mislead the consumers and affect the image of the company.

Agile translation not only has an impact on consistency, but also on the language agents themselves. They often have to work on extracted texts without having enough context (Kabát, 2023), leading to inaccuracy. A few tools offer integrating context in the translation projects to help the agent see the exact location of the phrase in the whole text[1]. However, this is not always applied either because of commercial and confidentiality reasons or the unavailability of the full context at that step of the project. Context in the original language can help understand the intent of the message better, but it cannot necessarily ensure correct translation, as this can differ linguistically, depending on how the other parts were translated. Moreover, the small number of words the agents work on in a single project, even if the overall daily

[1] https://www.transifex.com/blog/2022/app-localization-tools Accessed on 30 June 2024

volume is big, shrinks their contribution and role in the process of localization. They would rarely feel that they fully accomplished a project, as it is distributed into many agents.

4.6. In-process risks

Agents who work on content for the same client can also get used to the texts, terminology, and style, which makes them push the translation as fast as they can due to boredom or the habit to see similar texts. This can prevent the agent from reassessing the message and its fitness to the purpose. The repetitive cycles of agile translation lead to the same outcome, as the agent works on the same or a similar segment over and over again every time a minor update takes place. Such repetitions can also lead to missing updated terms or recent instructions added to the style guide, also causing inconsistency in the overall content. Moreover, opting for agile translation in general, and in localization in particular, necessitates creating bigger teams in order to distribute smaller tasks repeatedly and simultaneously to different agents so that the delivery can be faster. Having bigger teams can also lead to inconsistencies in the style, terms used, and general translation choices. As the survey answers showed, the majority of the respondents collaborate with other colleagues, which reflects the common tendency in the industry to favour team work. Furthermore, the fast pace and frequent iterations can limit opportunities for in-depth collaboration and feedback, which is already contradictory with the principles of the agile manifesto. Quality translation often benefits from collaboration among translators, editors, and subject-matter experts. However, the lack of comprehensive feedback loops in agile processes can result in lower-quality outputs. Quality in agile translation can be enhanced through regular sanity checks by experts, constructive audits, and translation memory cleanups, and granular instructions in the briefs and style guides.

Translation is no longer perceived as a craft or an art "where there are limited choices" and where "the sense of the translation must be tested for each unit and stretch of language against the original, and vice versa, as well as against the reference, so that clear errors of language and fact are eliminated" (Newmark, 1976, p. 21). Based on the notion of "repairing texts" used by Krings (2001) regarding post-editing, O'Brian argues that the translator is "demoted to the status of a fixer […] of seemingly unintelligent errors" (O'Brien, 2012). A localization language agent does not always have the luxury of working on a full text. He/she rather localizes the changes through MT post-editing, tests the functionality of the text in its context if required, fixes the linguistic bugs, updates terms, cleans up translation memories to reflect the term updates in all the other units, and pushes the task to the next agent as soon as possible to start working on another small one. This streamlined process mechanises translation and makes it similar to working in manufacturing assembly lines, except that these localization assembly lines are virtual and compromise the quality of the final product.

5. Conclusion

This paper attempted to examine the impact of agile working on the quality of translation in the localization process. It provided an overall description of the scene in the industry in terms of adopting speed-based solutions. It also briefly distinguished between the agile and waterfall management methods,

and how they are applied in localization. The study aimed to explore consistency issues in light of current agile practices, and how translators deal with such challenges. The study started based on a bilingual corpus of product blurbs using Arabic and international English versions of corporate websites. A few examples were provided to show inaccuracy and inconsistency issues within the message, and how these issues can be caused by agility. The use of machine translation, memories, and post-editing are all tools used to speed up the process, and they are all factors that impact the translation quality negatively. To interpret those trends from the translators' point of view, a survey was designed to collect feedback from translators. The responses confirmed the inconsistency challenges and were associated to a great extent with agile aspects in the process regardless of the translator's experience and content type. The survey helped reveal more details about the consequences of agility, such as the means they use to keep consistency, and how challenging consistency is for them. The responses, despite their relatively small number, provided a detailed understanding of the current practices. With the examples, it is clearer how and why the translation quality can be affected by the agile practices.

The discussion referred to the impact of agility on the translator, even though the notion is sometimes fuzzy in localization due to the multiagency. This multiplicity shows how the translator's role is becoming smaller in terms of quantity and visibility, and his/her task is urged to become faster and repetitive. I argued that this process is similar to manufacturing assembly lines, with reservation to the good quality ensured in industrial processes but compromised in localization.

By examining the implications of agile work on localized content, this research sought to provide valuable insights for translation scholars, project managers, and localization professionals. It aimed to contribute to the ongoing discourse on optimizing translation practices to meet the evolving needs of global communication and content delivery. The paper should contribute to the practice with more insight on the advantages and disadvantages of agile work, and integrate relevant research from management into Translation Studies. It can also be a helpful explanation of the work nature awaiting translation students wishing to work in localization. Future research can also benefit from this exploratory study to conduct on-site studies which link between the output and the process.

The adoption of agile translation methodologies has undoubtedly streamlined translation processes and aligned them with the demands of the global market. However, it has also transformed the role of the translator, making it more mechanistic and less centered on human creativity. As the industry continues to evolve, it is essential to strike a balance between the efficiency afforded by agile processes and the invaluable human touch that skilled translators bring to their work. This balance will ensure that while the speed and scalability of translation services improve, the quality and cultural relevance of localized content are not compromised.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix

Survey: Exploring translation workflows and output consistency in localization

Thank you for participating in this survey. We are interested in understanding your experiences and perspectives regarding workflow processes and their influence on consistency in localization projects. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes.

Personal contact information are not required or collected. Your answers are anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. Please choose the closest answer to your situation.

Your main status

- On-site
- Off-site
- Hybrid

How long have you worked in the field of translation/localization?

- Less than 5 years
- 5 – 10 years

- 10+ years

Translated content

What type of localization do you usually work on?

- Websites & platforms
- Applications
- Software
- Games
- Video subtitling
- Other
- A mix of several ones

Which type of content do you mostly localize? Multiple choices are possible

- Humanitarian/NGO content
- Marketing/commercial
- Help articles
- Legal
- Technical
- User interface
- Official/governmental
- Medical
- Other

In your work, how often do you collaborate with other translators, editors, or team members on the same project?

- Almost always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Workflow and project management

How often do you receive partial, incremental project updates rather than complete documents at the beginning?

- Very often
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

When new content or updates are added to a project, how is this typically managed?

- I handle updates independently, as a continuation of the initial work.
- Updates are assigned to different agents.
- There is a handover or briefing process to ensure consistency.
- Other (Please describe in the space below)

If you answered "Other" in the previous question, please explain how.

Consistency across translations

How do you typically ensure terminology consistency when working on large projects or projects with frequent updates?

- Rely on personal glossaries and translation memories
- Collaborate with team members to maintain consistent terms
- Use company-provided glossaries/translation memory tools
- Other (Please describe below)

If you answered "Other" in the previous question, please explain how.

In your opinion, how does working on a project with frequent updates or multiple contributors affect the consistency of language use, tone, and style across different sections?

- No impact
- Minor impact

- Moderate impact
- Significant impact

How easy or difficult do you find it to maintain consistency when updates are made to existing translations?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

Specific consistency factors

In your experience, how often do translation updates create challenges in ensuring the following aspects are consistent? (Please select all that apply)

- Terminology
- Tone and voice
- Formatting and layout
- Cultural nuances
- Style preferences (e.g., formal vs. informal language)
- Terminology
- Tone and voice
- Formatting and layout
- Cultural nuances
- Style preferences (e.g., formal vs. informal language)

How often do you receive feedback from clients or project managers about the need for maintaining consistency in the following areas? (Select all that apply)

- Formatting and layout
- Different parts of the text (e.g., title and body paragraph)
- Style preferences (e.g., formal vs. informal language)
- Terminology
- Accuracy of cultural context

- Style/tone
- Formatting and layout
- Different parts of the text (e.g., title and body paragraph)
- Style preferences (e.g., formal vs. informal language)
- Terminology
- Accuracy of cultural context
- Style/tone

When managing project updates, what resources are most helpful for maintaining consistency?

- Translation memory tools
- Style guides
- Communication with other team members
- Regular feedback sessions
- Other (Please describe below)

If you answered "Other" in the previous question, please explain how.

About the author

Madiha Kassawat holds a PhD in Translation Studies and is an associate researcher at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. Her research has focused on website localization, translation quality, and transcreation. She is a member of the editorial team of the journal Critic: Pour une traductologie africaine. She is herself a practicing professional translator and reviewer in the field of localization.